

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

All the Year Round

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WILLING TO DIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

CHAPTER LXIII. AT THE THREE NUNS.

WHEN Richard Marston left me, his chaise stood at the door, with a team of four horses, quite necessary to pull a four-wheeled carriage over the fells, through whose gorges the road to the nearest railway station is carried.

The pleasant setting sun flashed over the distant fells, and glimmered on the pebbles of the court-yard, and cast a long shadow of Richard Marston as he stood upon the steps, looking down upon the yellow, worn flags, in dark thought.

"Here, put this in," he said, handing his only piece of luggage, a black leather travelling-bag, to one of the post-boys. "You know the town of Golden Friars?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, stop at Mr. Jarlcot's house."

Away went the chaise, with its thin roll of dust, like the smoke of a hedge-fire, all along the road, till they pulled up at Mr. Jarlcot's house.

Out jumped Mr. Marston, and knocked a sharp summons with the brass knocker on the hall-door.

The maid opened the door and stood at the step with a mysterious look of inquiry in Mr. Marston's face. The rumour that was already slowly spreading in Golden Friars had suddenly been made sure, by a telegraphic message from Lemuel Blount to Mr. Jarlcot. His good wife had read it just five minutes before Mr. Marston's arrival.

"When is Mr. Jarlcot to be home again?"

"Day after to-morrow, please, sir."

"Well, when he comes, don't forget to

tell him I called. No, this is better;" and he wrote, in pencil, on his card, the date and the words, "Called twice—most anxious to see Mr. Jarlcot;" and laid it on the table.

"Can I see Mr. Spaight?" he inquired. Tall, stooping Mr. Spaight, the confidential man, with his bald head, spectacles, and long nose, emerged politely, with a pen behind his ear, at this question, from the door of the front room, which was Mr. Jarlcot's office.

"Oh! Mr. Spaight," said Richard Marston, "have you heard from Mr. Jarlcot to-day?"

"A short letter, Mr. Marston, containing nothing of business; only a few items of news; he's in London till to-morrow; he saw Mr. Blount there."

"Then he has heard, of course, of our misfortune?"

"Yes, sir; and we all sympathise with you, Mr. Marston, deeply, sir, in your affliction. Will you please to step in, sir, and look at the letter?"

Mr. Marston accepted the invitation.

There were two or three sentences that interested him.

"I have had a conversation with Mr. Blount this morning. He fears very much that Sir Harry did not execute the will. I saw Messrs. Hutt and Babbage, who drafted the will; but they can throw no light upon the matter, and say that the result of a search, only, can; which Mr. Blount says won't take five minutes to make."

This was interesting; but the rest was rubbish. Mr. Marston took his leave, got into the chaise again, and drove under the windows of the George and Dragon, along the already deserted road that ascends the fells from the margin of the lake.

Richard Marston put his head from the window and looked back; there was no living creature in his wake. Before him he saw nothing but the post-boys' stooping backs, and the horses with their four patient heads bobbing before him. The light was failing, still it would have served to read by for a little while; and there was something he was very anxious to read. He was irresolute; there was a risk in it; he could not make up his mind.

He looked at his watch; it would take him nearly three hours to reach the station at the other side of the fells. Unlucky the delay at Dorracleugh!

The light failed. White mists began to crawl across the road and were spreading and rising fantastically on the hill-sides. The moon came out. He was growing more impatient. In crossing a mountain the eye measures so little distance gained for the time expended. This journey seemed, to him, interminable.

At one of the zig-zag turns of the road there rises a huge fragment of white stone, bearing a rude resemblance to a horseman; a highwayman, you might fancy him, awaiting the arrival of the travellers. In Richard's eye it took the shape of old Sir Harry Rokestone, as he used to sit, when he had reined in his tall iron-grey hunter, and was waiting to have a word with some one coming up.

He muttered something as he looked sternly ahead at this fantastic reminder.

On they drove; the image resolved itself into its rude sides and angles, and was passed; and the pale image of Sir Harry no longer waylaid his nephew.

Slowly the highest point of the road was gained, and then begins the flying descent; and the well-known landmarks, as he consults his watch, from time to time, by the moonlight, assure him that they will reach the station in time to catch the train.

He is there. He pays his post-boys, and with his black travelling-bag in hand, runs out upon the gravelled front, from which the platform extends its length.

"The up-train not come yet?" inquired the young man, looking down the line eagerly.

"Not due for four minutes, Mr. Marston," said the station-master, with officious politeness, "and we shall hardly have it up till some minutes later. They are obliged to slacken speed in the Malwyn cutting at present. Your luggage all right, I hope? Shall I get your ticket for you, Mr. Marston?"

The extraordinary politeness of the official had, perhaps, some connexion with the fact that the rumour of Sir Harry's death was there already, and the Rokestone estates extended beyond the railway. Richard Marston was known to be the only nephew of the deceased baronet, and to those who knew nothing of the interior politics of the family, his succession appeared certain.

Mr. Marston thanked him, but would not give him the trouble; he fancied that the station-master, who was perfectly innocent of any treacherous design, wished to play the part of a detective, and find out all he could about his movements and belongings.

Richard Marston got away from him as quickly as he civilly could, without satisfying his curiosity on any point. The train was up, and the doors clapping a few minutes later; and he, with his bag, rug, and umbrella, got into his place, with a thin, sour old lady in black, opposite; a nurse at one side, with two children in her charge, who were always jumping down on peoples' feet, or climbing up again, and running to the window, and bawling questions with incessant clamour; and, at his other side, a mummy-coloured old gentleman with an olive-green cloth cap, the flaps of which were tied under his chin, and a cream-coloured muffler.

He had been hoping for a couple of hours' quiet; perhaps a tenantless carriage. This state of things for a man in search of meditation was disappointing.

They were now, at length, at Dykham. A porter in waiting, from the inn called the Three Nuns, took Marston's bag and rug, and led the way to that house, only fifty yards off, where he took up his quarters for the night.

He found Mr. Blount's promised letter from London there. He did not wait for candles and his sitting-room. In his hat and overcoat, by the gas-light at the bar, he read it breathlessly. It said substantially what Mr. Jaricot's letter had already told him, and nothing more. It was plain, then, that Sir Harry had left every one in the dark as to whether he had or had not executed the will.

In answer to the waiter's hospitable inquiries about supper, he said he had dined late. It was not true; but it was certain that he had no appetite.

He got a sitting-room to himself; he ordered a fire, for he thought the night chilly. He had bought a couple of books, two or three magazines, and as many news-

papers. He had his window curtains drawn; and their agreeable smell of old tobacco smoke assured him that there could be no objection to his cigar.

"I'll ring when I want anything," he said; "and, in the mean time, let me be quiet."

It was here, when he had been negotiating for Sir Harry the renewal of certain leases to a firm in Dykham, that the telegraph had brought him the startling message, and Mr. Blount said in the same message that he was writing particulars by that day's post.

Mr. Marston had not allowed grass to grow under his feet, as you see; and he was now in the same quarters, about to put the case before himself, with a thorough command of its facts.

CHAPTER LXIV. THE WILL.

CANDLES lighted, shutters closed, curtains drawn, and a small but cheerful fire flickering in the grate. The old-fashioned room looked pleasant; Richard Marston was nervous and not like himself. He looked over the "deaths" in the papers, but Sir Harry's was not among them. He threw the papers one after the other on the table, and read nothing.

He got up and stood with his back to the fire. He looked like a man who had got a chill, whom nothing could warm, who was in for a fever. He was in a state he had not anticipated; he almost wished he had left undone the things he had done.

He bolted the door; he listened at it; he tried it with his hand. He had something in his possession that embarrassed and almost frightened him, as if it had been some damning relic of a murdered man.

He sat down and drew from his breast-pocket a tolerably bulky paper, a law paper with a piece of red tape about it, and a seal affixing the tape to the paper. The paper was indorsed in pencil, in Sir Harry's hand, with the words, "Witnessed by Darby Mayne and Hugh Fenwick," and the date followed.

A sudden thought struck him. He put the paper into his pocket again, and made a quiet search of the room, even opening and looking into the two old cupboards, and peeping behind the curtains to satisfy his nervous fancy that no one was concealed there.

Then again he took out the paper, cut the tape, broke the seal, unfolded the broad document, and holding it extended in both hands, read, "The last will and testament

of Sir Harry Rokestone, of Dorracleugh, in the County of —, Baronet."

Here then was the great sacrilege. He stood there with the spoils of the dead in his hands. But there was no faltering now in his purpose.

He read on: "I, Harry Rokestone, &c., Baronet, of Dorracleugh, &c., being of sound mind, and in good health, do make this, my last will," &c.

And on and on he read, his face darkening.

"Four trustees," he muttered, and read on for awhile, for he could not seize its effect as rapidly and easily as an expert would. "Well, yes, two thousand two hundred pounds sterling by way of annuity—annuity!—to be paid for the term of his natural life, in four equal sums, on the first of May, the first of August—yes, and so on—as a first charge upon all the said estates, and so forth. Well, what else?"

And so he went on humming and humming over the paper, and his head slowly turning from side to side, as he read.

"And Blount to have two hundred a year! I guessed that old Methodist knew what he was about; and then there's the money. What about the money?" He read on as before. "Five thousand pounds. Five thousand for me! Upon my soul! out of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds in government stock. That's modest, all things considered, and an annuity just of two thousand two hundred a year for my life, the rental of the estates, as I happen to know, being nearly nine thousand." This he said with a sneering, uneasy chuckle. "And that is all!"

And he stood erect, holding the paper by the corner between his finger and thumb, and letting it lie against his knee.

"And everything else," he muttered, "land and money, without exception, goes to Miss Ethel Ware. She the lady of the fee; I a poor annuitant!"

He was half stifled with rage and mortification.

"I see now, I see what he means. I see the drift of the whole thing. I see my way. I mustn't make a mistake, though—there can't be any. Nothing can be more distinct."

He folded up the will rapidly, and replaced it in his pocket.

Within the last half-hour his forehead had darkened, and his cheeks had hollowed. How strangely these subtle muscular contractions correspond with the dominant moral action of the moment!

He took out another paper, a very old one, worn at the edges, and indorsed "Case on behalf of Richard Rokestone Marston, Esquire." I suppose he had read it at least twenty times that day, during his journey to Dorracleugh. "No, nothing on earth can be clearer or more positive," he thought. "The whole thing is as plain as that two and two make four. It covers everything."

There were two witnesses to this will corresponding with the indorsement, each had signed in presence of the other; all was technically exact.

Mr. Marston had seen and talked with these witnesses on his arrival at Dorracleugh, and learned enough to assure him that nothing was to be apprehended from them.

They were persons in Sir Harry's employment, and Sir Harry had called them up on the day that the will was dated, and got them to witness in all about a dozen different documents, which they believed to be leases, but were not sure. Sir Harry had told them nothing about the nature of the papers they were witnessing, and had never mentioned a will to them. Richard Marston had asked Mrs. Shackleton also, and she had never heard Sir Harry speak of a will.

While the news of Sir Harry's death rested only upon a telegraphic message, which might be forged or precipitate, he dared not break the seal and open the will. Mr. Blount's and Mr. Jaricot's letters, which he had read this evening, took that event out of the possibility of question.

He was safe also in resolving a problem that was now before him.

Should he rest content with his annuity and five thousand pounds, or seize the entire property by simply destroying the will?

If the will were allowed to stand, he might count on my fidelity, and secure possession of all it bequeathed by marrying me. He had only to place the will somewhere in Sir Harry's room where it would be sure to be found, and the affair would proceed in its natural course without more trouble to him.

But Mr. Blount was appointed, with very formidable powers, my guardian, and one of his duties was to see, in the event of my marrying, that suitable settlements were made, and that there was no reasonable objection to the candidate for my hand.

Mr. Blount was a quiet but very reso-

lute man in all points of duty. Knowing what was Sir Harry's opinion of his nephew, would he, within the meaning of the will, accept him as a suitor against whom no reasonable objection lay? And even if this were got over, Mr. Blount would certainly sanction no settlement which did not give me as much as I gave. My preponderance of power, as created by the will, must therefore be maintained in the settlement. I had no voice in the matter; and thus it seems, that in most respects, even by marriage, the operation of the will was inexorable. Why, then, should the will exist? and why, with such a fortune and liberty within his grasp, should he submit to conditions that would fetter him?

Even the pleasure of depriving Mr. Blount of his small annuity, ridiculous as such a consideration seemed, had its influence. He was keenly incensed with that officious and interested agent. The vicar, in their first conversation, had opened his eyes as to the action of that pretended friend.

"Mr. Blount told me, just before he left this," said the good vicar, "that he had been urging and even entreating Sir Harry for a long time to execute a will, which he had by him, requiring nothing but his signature, but, as yet, without success, and that he feared he would never do it."

Now approached the moment of decision.

He had read a trial in the newspapers long before, in which a curious case was proved. A man in the position of a gentleman had gone down to a deserted house that belonged to him, for the express purpose of there destroying a will which would have injuriously affected him.

He had made up his mind to destroy it, but he was haunted with the idea that, do it how he might in the village where he lived, one way or other the crime would be discovered. Accordingly he visited, with many precautions, this old house, which was surrounded closely by a thick wood. From one of the chimneys a boy, in search of jackdaws, saw one little puff of smoke escape, and his curiosity being excited, he climbed to the window of the room to which the chimney corresponded, and peeping in, he saw something flaming on the hob, and near it a man, who started, and hurriedly left the room on observing him.

Fancying pursuit, the detected man took his departure, without venturing to return to the room.

The end of the matter was, that his journey to the old house was tracked, and not only did the boy identify him, and tell his suspicious story, but the charred pieces of burnt paper found upon the hob, having been exposed to chemical action, had revealed the writing, a portion of which contained the signatures of the testator and the witnesses, and these and other parts thus rescued, identified it with the original draft in possession of the dead man's attorney. Thus the crime was proved, and the will set up and supplemented by what, I believe, is termed secondary evidence.

Who could be too cautious, then, in such a matter? It seemed as hard to hide away effectually all traces of a will destroyed as the relics of a murder.

Again he was tempted to spare the will, and rest content with an annuity and safety. It was but a temptation, however, and a passing one.

He unbolted the door softly, and rang the bell.

The waiter found him extended on a sofa, apparently deep in his magazine.

He ordered tea—nothing else; he was precise in giving his order; he did not want the servant pottering about his room; he had reasons for choosing to be specially quiet.

The waiter returned with his tea-tray, and found him buried, as before, in his magazine.

"Is everything there?" inquired Richard Marston.

"Everything there? Yes, sir, everything."

"Well, then, you need not come again till I touch the bell."

The waiter withdrew.

Mr. Marston continued absorbed in his magazine for just three minutes. Then he rose softly, stepped lightly to the door, and listened.

He bolted it again; tried it, and found it fast.

In a moment the will was in his hand. He gave one dark, searching look round the room, and then he placed the document in the very centre of the embers. He saw it smoke sullenly, and curl and slowly warp, and spring with a faint sound, that made him start, more than ever cannondid, into sudden flame. That little flame seemed like a balefire to light up the broad sky of night with a vengeful flicker, and throw a pale glare over the wide parks and mosses, the forests, fells, and meres, of dead Sir

Harry's great estate; and when the flame leaped up and died, it seemed that there was no light left in the room, and he could see nothing but the myriad little worms of fire wriggling all over the black flakes which he thrust, like struggling enemies, into the hollow of the fire.

Richard Marston was a man of redundant courage, and no scruple. But have all men some central fibre of fear that can be reached, and does the ghost of the conscience they have killed within them sometimes rise and overshadow them with horror? Richard Marston, with his feet on the fender and the tongs in his hands, pressed down the coals upon the ashes of the will, and felt faint and dizzy, as he had done on the night of the shipwreck, when, with bleeding forehead, he had sat down for the first time in the steward's house at Malory.

An event as signal had happened now. After nearly ten minutes had passed, during which he had never taken his eyes off the spot where the ashes were glowing, he got up and took the candle down to see whether a black film of the paper had escaped from the grate. Then stealthily he opened the window to let out any smell of burnt paper.

He lighted his cigar, and smoked; unbolted the door, rang the bell, and ordered brandy-and-water. The suspense was over, and the crisis past.

He was resolved to sit there till morning to see that fire burnt out.

SOUND AND FURY—SIGNIFYING SOMETHING.

To the cultivated mind lodged in the healthy body of one whose nerves are not too finely and sensitively strung, all the great sounds of nature are delightful. The thunder-peal—the rush and beat of waves upon the beach—the roar of the cataract, or the moan of the stormy wind among the forest trees, make divine music to the souls of all lovers of nature. There are some persons to whom the sublime reverberations of the thunder seem, as they were told perhaps in their infancy, to be the voice of God, speaking to the wicked, and in whose breasts the awful sound excites emotions more of terror than admiration; but educated people, and especially those of poetic and imaginative temperament, generally find a solemn joy in listening to a thunder-storm, and feel with Byron that "night and storm and darkness are wondrous strong,

but lovely in their strength." Thunder has inspired some of the noblest passages in the works of the greatest poets of all ages; not among the least sublime of which is to be found in the grand description by King David of the wrath of God in the eighteenth psalm. But even those who cannot banish from their minds the idea of danger in a thunder-storm, and for that reason cannot share the raptures which Byron has so fervently expressed, enjoy the roar of waters—whether they beat upon the sea, or descend from a height, as at Niagara, or a thousand other cataracts of less volume and celebrity. "The fall of waters as they howl and hiss, and boil in endless torture," excites no emotions of personal terror in him who wanders in safety by the shore, or stands upon terra firma amid the spray of the exulting and abounding river. The billows vainly spending their force against the land intone a mighty psalmody, in unison with the emotions of a fervent and reverent spirit, while the more monotonous chant of the waterfall seems to sing a similar hymn of power, of majesty, and of eternity. The idea of noise does not enter into the mind in view of these master-works of creation, though the idea of sound, grand, majestic, and superhuman, pervades the imagination. The sough and swell of the wintry winds among the leafless branches of the trees is also grand in the extreme, and awakens any poetic feeling that may be latent in the spirit of the listener. Indeed, it may be said of those who are insensible to the charms of such melancholy music, that they are shut out from the enjoyment of an innocent and exalting pleasure, that they live in the outer and not in the inner circles of the spiritual life, and have no fine sympathies with surrounding nature.

In hard and disagreeable contrast with the sounds of solitude and the country, are the noises of society and the town. It may be granted that the shout of an excited multitude almost equals in grandeur of effect the thunder-clap of the skies; but the great sound is seldom heard, and when heard in less happy countries than our own, is but too often likely to be accompanied by the lightning-flash of a street revolution. The four great noises of civilisation are the ringing of church bells, the shriek of the railway whistle, the beating of gongs, and the firing of cannon in honour of the arrival or departure of royal personages, or the celebration of royal birthdays. The first of these noises is not without its pleasing

effects upon the mind. The last three are barbarous and abominable, and more suggestive of the savage than of the civilised character.

Mr. Ruskin, who has his idiosyncrasies, as all the world knows—at least all that portion of the world which reads and appreciates good English—has lately been stirred up to some very amiable wrath on the subject of the noises made by church bells. Mr. Ruskin will find few to sympathise with him in his dislike of those instruments. Whatever may be their effect in the crowded streets of cities, no person of taste and imagination can hear them sounding from afar, over field and dale, woodland and river, from the belfry of some village church, without the pleasantest emotions. And even in cities their effect is sometimes delightful. Nothing, for instance, can be grander and more solemn than the voice of Big Ben in the clock tower at Westminster, sounding forth the twelve magnificent vibrations that tell the belated or the sleepless Londoner that it is midnight. We have all of us, in our time, shared the feeling expressed by Thomas Moore :

Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells,
Of hope and love and that sweet time
When first we heard their joyous chime.

In like manner the Bonnie Christ Church Bells and the Bells of Aberdovey, and a score of other pleasant tunes and dainty lyrics, recal the sweet recollections of the happiest time in all people's lives—the time when they were young and hopeful, and looked towards the future with the brilliant anticipations which are never to be fully realised. The music of the far off chimes takes the tone of the listener's mind, and responds alike to his joy and sadness. And if we frame into words what the bells say to us, they invariably take the meaning we wish to give them. The bells of Bow Church but repeated to young Richard Whittington, as he rested on Highgate Rise, the thoughts that were passing through his mind. Doubtless in after-life they aided the ripening of the thought into action, and helped the prophecy to produce its own fulfilment :

When with care-untroubled mind
We hear the chimes upon the wind—
One, two, and three!
Oh merrily!
Four, five, six, seven,
From earth to heaven!
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight!
The joy bells storm its opening gate.
'Tis from our thought they take their measure,
And ring in sympathy of pleasure.

No! Mr. Ruskin, all the denunciation in the world will never persuade the world that the chime and peal of church bells, especially when mellowed by distance, are other than pleasant to the ear and to the imagination.

But the three other noises of civilisation above specified may well be called barbarous, and merit all the reprobation which Mr. Ruskin, or any one else, can bestow. Whether the railway whistle, the gong, or the firing of cannon is the most diabolical of sounds, it is difficult to decide. I for one can imagine no purgatorial torture more intense than would be the incessant repetition of any of the three for any long period of time. Madness would be the result of twenty-four hours' endurance of such unutterable misery to any persons whose nerves were of softer texture than the cranks of a steam-engine. It is my pleasure to live in the country, and it is my business to come frequently to town. Whenever I arrive at, or depart from, the London Bridge terminus of the South-Eastern, and of the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railways, my ears are perpetually assailed—I might, without exaggeration, say pierced—by the short, sharp, sudden shriek of the steam-whistle, notifying the egress or ingress of a train. The sensation sends a pang through my nervous system; my teeth jar, and my hands involuntarily rise to my ears to deaden the excruciating sound. Why, I should like to know, cannot we shut our ears instinctively against odious noises—as we can shut our eyes against painful sights by a mere effort of the will? Such an improvement on the human frame divine might lengthen the days of many a railway traveller, and render them more agreeable while they lasted. In the northern parts of England a steam horn used to be employed—perhaps is employed still—to give warning that the train was about to start; a warning which was quite as effective, though by no means so startling, as the demoniacal whistle. A porter, into whose good opinion I have ingratiated myself by sundry sixpences and pints of beer, informed me, in reply to something not at all like a blessing which escaped my lips the other day when the shriek of the whistle was more than usually sharp, that upon an average the whistle was sounded about once a minute all day long, and a great part of the night. If it were not for a drop of beer now and then to strengthen his nerves, he couldn't stand it. One poor

fellow, a mate of his, had petitioned the company to be removed from London Bridge to some quieter station, as he was afraid he should be driven mad. After a month or so he was called before some official or other, who told him that he was an ass, and might leave the service any day he liked, and so make way for somebody with robuster nerves, or with no nerves at all. "But your Jacks-in-office," added the porter, "is always insulting to poor people."

But such is the hubbub of noise in many of our manufacturing towns and cities, that it has become difficult to summon the workpeople in some of the great factories by the ringing of a bell, as used to be the former practice. So the steam-whistle has been brought into requisition for the purpose, and sends its shrill alarm through the swarming alleys and streets where the workers reside, vexing the ears of invalids and studious people residing at a distance. The result has been several actions at law against the disturbers of the public quiet, which have, for the most part, been decided against the whistle and its owners. But of all the agony which the shriek of the steam-whistle is capable of inflicting, the agony of hearing it in a fog on the Atlantic is the most intense. It was once my ill fortune to be on board a large steamer, scudding along at the rate of twelve knots an hour in the midst of a dense fog off the coast of Labrador, and to hear the steam-whistle sounded once every two minutes, for more than twelve hours, to give notice to any possible vessel that might be speeding on in the opposite direction, that there was danger of collision. When we got clear of the fog at last, and steamed out into an open atmosphere, and could see the ocean before us, and the blue sky above, the sensation of relief that came from the silencing of the whistle was positively divine, and confirmed me in the belief that of all the pleasures of this world, there is none greater than the cessation of pain.

It may be remembered that in the first war which Great Britain declared against the Chinese empire, the Chinese endeavoured to frighten away our squadron by beating gongs upon the shore. Bad however as the gong is, it is not so grievous an infliction as the steam-whistle. It is heard nowhere but in hotels and great houses, and then only to summon people to breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Outsiders do not hear it, and it is only a nuisance for a short time, and within a limited sphere. Tea, that we

borrowed from the Chinese, is so choice a blessing of civilisation as to make us wonder how our ancestors could have done without it. But how we ever could have been so stupid as to borrow from their barbarism such an instrument as the gong is a matter for still greater amazement.

As for the firing of salutes in honour of the arrival or departure of great personages, or of the birthdays of kings, emperors, and other sovereigns, I agree with the erudite Baron Grimsho, late governor of Barataria, that it is a barbarous practice, very odious and painful, that seems to be founded on the childish and uncivilised notion that a great noise is symbolical of a great joy. If any minister of Great Britain, whether he be of the Liberal or the Conservative party, instead of paring down the small salaries of ill-paid clerks in the public offices, with a view to the proper economy of the public money, will order an account to be taken of the sums of money that are squandered on the useless, noisy, wasteful blazing away of gunpowder, he will be surprised to find how many thousands of pounds per annum are thus puffed out into infinite space, with a bad noise and a bad smell, without doing any good to anybody but the gunpowder manufacturers. The ringing of bells is celestial music as compared with the infernal din of artillery. Speak up, Mr. Ruskin! Let the world hear what you have to say on the subject of the three hideous noises, either of which heard singly is a thousand times more distressing than the jangle of all the bells that were ever rung in the world since bells were invented.

MERMAIDS.

SAILORS and seaside folk have always had a tendency to believe in mermaids. They see more varieties of fish, and stranger forms of amphibia, than landsmen; and, moreover, they enjoy marvellous stories about wonderful things. Classical writers tell us that the Sirens were two maidens who sat by the sea, and so charmed with their music all who sailed by, that the fascinated wayfarers remained on the spot till they died. The Sirens (afterwards increased to three in number, and called by various names) are supposed to have had much to do with mermaids—that is, people who believed in the one had no difficulty in believing in the other.

Tracing down, century after century, we

find an abundance of mermaid stories, vouch'd for with all the gravity of genuine belief. In an old book descriptive of Holland, the reader is told that in 1480 a tempest broke through the embankments of the low-lying districts, and covered much meadow and pasture land with water. Some maidens of the town of Edam, in West Friesland, going in a boat over the flooded land to milk their cows, perceived a mermaid entangled in the mud and shallow water. They took her into the boat, and brought her with them to Edam, dressed her in woman's apparel, and taught her to spin. She fed like one of them, but could not be brought to speak. Some time afterwards she was brought to Haarlem, where she lived for several years, though still showing an inclination for the water. "They had given it," we are further informed, "some notion of a deity; and it made its reverences very devoutly whenever it passed by a crucifix."

In 1560, on the west coast of Ceylon, some fishermen brought up at one draught of a net "seven mermen and maids," which a Jesuit missionary certified to be veritable types of human beings—excepting, we suppose, in regard to fish-shaped tails. This tail question was, in the same century, settled in a peculiar manner by engravers and herald painters. Mermaids with two tails were often engraved in French and German books on heraldry; a double-tailed mermaid was engraved in a Swiss edition of Ptolemy's Geography, published in 1540; and the Venetian printers had a liking for the same kind of symbol on their title-pages.

Mary Queen of Scots was made the butt of numerous caricatures, some of which represented her in the character of a mermaid, sitting on a dolphin. One has been discovered in the State Paper Office—a mean and unmanly production, intended to cast ridicule on a woman who could not defend herself from its effects. It is supposed that Shakespeare, writing some years after the appearance of this caricature, had it in his mind when he created the Midsummer Night's Dream. Oberon says to Puck :

Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music.

We well know that Shakespeare made many of his characters talk about mermaids and sea-sirens—"I'll draw more

sailors than the mermaids shall;" "I'll stop mine ear against the mermaid's song;" "At the helm a seeming mermaid steers;" "Oh, train me not, 'sweet mermaid, with the note!'" "Her clothes spread wide, and mermaid-like awhile they bore her up"—are passages well-known to readers of Shakespeare. Nor are musical folk less acquainted with the charming air which Haydn gave to the mermaid's song, where the siren of the sea says to some enchanted mortal,

Come with me, and we will go
Where the rocks of coral grow.

An almanack for 1688 gravely told its readers, "Near the place where the famous Dee payeth its tribute to the German Ocean, if curious observers of wonderful things in nature will be pleased to resort thither on the 1st, 13th, and 29th of May, and in divers other times in the ensuing summer, as also in the harvest time to the 7th and 14th of October, they will undoubtedly see a pretty company of Mar Maids, creatures of admirable beauty, and likewise hear their charming, sweet, melodious voices." The prognosticator kindly tells us the exact song which these Scottish mermaids would sing; it was nothing less than a new version of God Save the King; but as the year 1688 was rather a critical one in matters dynastic, we are left somewhat in doubt whether the king to be thus honoured was James the Second or William of Orange. At any rate, the mermaids were pious as well as loyal, for one of the things they were to do was "To extol their Maker, and His bounty praise." About the same time, Merollo, a Spaniard or Italian, who made a voyage to Congo, told the readers of his narrative that he saw, in the sea, "some beings like unto men, not only in their figures, but likewise in their actions; for we saw them plainly gather a great quantity of a certain herb, with which they immediately plunged themselves into the sea." The sailors tried to catch them in a net, but the mermen were too wide awake—"they lifted up the net, and made their escape."

In 1701, according to Brand's Description of the Orkney and Shetland Islands, "A boat at the fishing drew her lines; and one of them, as the fishers thought, having some great fish upon it, was with greater difficulty than the rest raised from the ground. But when raised, it came more easily to the surface of the water; upon which a creature like a mermaid presented itself at the side of the boat. It had the

face, arms, breast, and shoulders of a woman, and long hair hanging down the back; but the nether part was beneath the water, so that they could not understand the shape thereof. The two fishers who were in the boat being surprised at this strange sight, one of them unadvisedly drew a knife and thrust it into her bosom, whereupon she cried, as they judged, 'Alas!' The hook giving way, she fell backward, and was no more seen; the hook being big, went in at her chin and out at the upper lip." Brand did not see all this; indeed, most of the mermaid stories come second or third hand. The fishers told a baillie, to whom the boat belonged, the baillie told a lady, and the lady told Mr. Brand. The man who cruelly stabbed the poor mermaid was much troubled afterwards. "He is now dead, and, as was observed, never prospered after this, but was haunted by an evil spirit in the appearance of an old man, who, as he thought, used to say unto him, 'Will ye do such a thing? Who killed the woman?' The other man then in the boat is yet alive in the isle of Burra." The man was certainly more like a brute than a fisherman, or he would not have drawn his knife for such a purpose; whether human or non-human, she would have been worth more to him alive than dead, even as an exhibition to villagers at a baubee a head.

In 1737, according to a Scottish magazine, the crew of a ship newly arrived in the Thames from the East Indies, reported that in the island of Mauritius they had partaken of a mermaid, the flesh of which was a good deal like veal. The mermaid weighed three or four hundredweight—rather a buxom specimen! The head was particularly large, and so were the features, which differed but little from those of a man or woman. The story tells of two of them, one with a beard four or five inches long, the other much more feminine. "When they are first taken," the narrator proceeds to say, "which is often on the ground, they cry and grieve with great sensibility." About the same time a story came from Vigo in Spain to the effect that some fishermen on that coast had caught a sort of merman, five feet and a half from head to foot. The head was like that of a goat, with a long beard and moustaches, a black skin, somewhat hairy, a very long neck, short arms, hands longer and larger than they ought to be in proportion, and long fingers, with nails like claws, webbed toes, and a fin at the lower part of the back.

The magazines for 1775 gave an account of a mermaid which was captured in the Levant, and brought to London. One of the learned periodicals gravely told its readers that the mermaid had the complexion and features of a European, like those of a young woman; that the eyes were light blue, the nose small and elegantly formed, the mouth small, the lips thin, "but the edges of them round like those of a codfish;" that the teeth were small, regular, and white; that the neck was well rounded; and that the ears were like those of the eel, "but placed like those of the human species, with gills for respiration, which appear like curls." There was no hair on the head, but "rolls, which, at a distance, might be mistaken for curls." There was a fin rising pyramidal from the temples, "forming a foretop, like that of a lady's head-dress." The bust was nearly like that of a young damsel, a proper orthodox mermaid, but, alas! all below the waist was exactly like a fish. Three sets of fins below the waist, one above the other, enabled her to swim. Finally, "It is said to have an enchanting voice, which it never exerts except before a storm." The writer in the Annual Register probably did not see this mermaid, which the Gentleman's Magazine described as being only three feet high. It was afterwards proved to be a cheat, made from the skin of the angle-shark.

A Welsh farmer named Reynolds, living at Pen-y-hold in 1782, saw a something which he appears to have believed to be a mermaid; he told the story to Doctor George Phillips, who told it to Mrs. Moore, who told it to a young lady pupil of hers, who wrote out an account of it for Mrs. Morgan, who inserted it in her Tour to Milford Haven. How much the story gained on its travels—like the Three Black Crows, or the parlour game of Russian Scandal—we are left to find out for ourselves; but its ultimate form was nearly as follows. One morning, just outside the cliff, Reynolds saw what seemed to him to be a person bathing in the sea, with the upper part of the body out of the water. On nearer view, it looked like the upper part of a person in a tub, a youth, say, of sixteen or eighteen years of age, with nice white skin; a sort of brownish body, and a tail, were under the water. The head and body were human in form, but the arms and hands thick in proportion to length, while the nose, running up high between the eyes,

terminated rather sharply. The mysterious being looked attentively at Reynolds, and at the cliffs, and at the birds flying in the air, with a wild gaze; but uttered no cry. Reynolds went to bring some companions to see the merman or mermaid; but when he returned it had disappeared. If we like to suppose that Reynolds had seen some kind of seal, and that the narration had grown to something else by repetition from mouth to mouth, perhaps we shall not be very far wrong.

The present century, like its predecessors, has had its crop of mermaid stories, reappearing from time to time. In 1809, one of these strange beings made its appearance off the coast of Caithness, in Scotland. The particulars we have not at hand; but it happens to be on record by what channels the narrative reached the public. Two servant girls and a boy saw something in the water which they decided must be a mermaid; they mentioned it to Miss Mackey, who wrote of it to Mrs. Jones, who showed the letter to Sir John Sinclair, who showed it to a gentleman, who caused the statement to be inserted in a newspaper. The Philosophical Society brought these facts to light. Even so grave a publication as Rees's Cyclopædia, in 1819, said, "We have a well-attested account of a merman near the great rock called Diamond, on the coast of Martinique. The persons who saw it gave in a precise description of it before a notary. They affirm that they saw it wipe its hands over its face, and even heard it blow its nose."

Bartholomew Fair was of course not without its mermaid—more or less like a fish, as the case might be. In 1822, the fashionable West-end had given half-crowns to see a mermaid. It was a clumsy and barefaced piece of workmanship, made up chiefly of a dried monkey's head and body, and a fish's tail; and was altogether about as ugly an affair as ever drew silly people to an exhibition. After a career of half-crowns, the show came down to a shilling admission fee; and although naturalists and journalists were not slow in exposing the fraud, the success was considerable; for, we are told, "three to four hundred people every day pay their shilling each to see a disgusting sort of compound animal, which contains in itself everything that is odious and disagreeable." A drawing of this precious production, as exhibited in an upright glass case, was etched at the time by Cruikshank. The mermaid gradually

went down in dignity, until at length she became a penny show at Bartholomew Fair in 1825. How many mermaids there are at this present moment boxed up in caravans rambling from one country fair to another, it would be hard to guess; but some there are, beyond question.

Our own pages contained, about eight years ago,* a narrative tending to show that a belief in mermaids still lingers in our western maritime counties.

Some naturalists have pointed out characteristics in marine animals which afford a very probable groundwork for many of the current mermaid stories. Witness Sir J. E. Tennent's account of the dugong: "The rude approach to the human outline, observed in the shape of the head of the creature, and the attitude of the mother while suckling her young, holding it to her breast with one flipper, while swimming with the other, holding the heads of both above water; and when disturbed, suddenly diving and displaying her fish-like tail—these, together with her habitual demonstrations of strong maternal affection, probably gave rise to the fable of the mermaid." Woman or fish, normal or abnormal, the mermaid has taken a good hold of poets and composers, interlude writers and farce writers; and the Mermaid in Fleet-street was one of the famous old taverns of past days. The orthodox mermaid has, of course, a comely maiden's face, with beautiful hair, which she is combing with one hand, while in the other she holds a looking-glass.

NEAR THE END.

O THE wild days of youth! the dear dead days!
Dark are the lights and all the chorus dumb,
And cold and faintly through the gath'ring haze
Of this sad twilight time thin echoes come,
And wand'ring voices haunt the glimmering ways.

Sitting alone in these last empty years,
Life, starved and dwindled, tells its old tales o'er,
And, like a wind, the Past sings in mine ears,
And, like a wind, goes by. Alas! no more
For me the glad green Spring of smiles and tears!

Oft from the dreamland of the Long Ago,
Pale faces seek me with their eager eyes,
And fair I'd follow them, and fair would know,
How fares it with them 'neath the starless skies
That brood above the silent shades below.

Brave souls and beautiful! to what forlorn
Mute fields of Death's cold kingdom are ye passed?
O dreary Death, that hath nowhere borne,
To pluck earth's fairest flowers and o'ercast
Sweet scents and colours with relentless scorn!

Ah me! A little while the evening light
Shall linger wanly in the western sky:
A little while before my fal'ring sight
The pallid day shall glimmer ere it die.
Then, dumbly-dark, shall fall all-ending night.

FAMOUS BRITISH REGIMENTS.

THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH (THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS).

PERHAPS no British regiment has done so many gallant deeds in so short a time as the Eighty-eighth, and no men have fought with more brilliant courage or with a gayer heart. In 1793, when our ill-judged war with revolutionary France led to the enrolling of ten fresh regiments, the Eighty-eighth was raised chiefly in pugnacious Connaught, and the Honourable Thomas de Burgh (afterwards Earl of Clanricarde) was appointed colonel. The facings were yellow, and the regiment was to bear on its colours and appointments an Irish harp and a crown, with the motto of the order of St. Patrick, "Quis separabit."

In the disastrous campaign of the Duke of York in Flanders, the Eighty-eighth, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Kepell—and one thousand strong—had ample share of the blows and hardships; but under such a general as the duke no glory could possibly be gained. Two companies of the Eighty-eighth fought in the West Indies in 1795, and in Egypt in 1801, and returned to England, with a fighting Irishman's luck, on the very day war broke out again with France. An old colonel of the Eighty-eighth, General Reid, then in his eighty-second year, though very deaf and infirm, at once volunteered his services against the French, on whom, in his letter to the adjutant-general, he thanked God he "had never turned his back." In 1806, the regiment joined the South American expedition under Brigade-General Sir Robert Crawford, and sailed for Monte Video, then occupied by the unfortunate Lieutenant-General Whitelock. At the final review in Crowhurst Park, near Hastings, Sir Arthur Wellesley said to the Eighty-eighth:

"I wish to God I was going with you! I am sure you will do your duty, ay, and distinguish yourselves too."

In the irrational assault on Buenos Ayres the Connaught Rangers were divided into two wings, one under Lieutenant-Colonel Duff, the other under Major Vandeleur. The order was to march on the city, to seize the houses on the river banks, and to form on the flat roofs. At half past six A.M., the right wing formed in

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, First Series, vol. xiii., p. 333.

sections and advanced into a silent and apparently deserted city. The men were insanely ordered not to load, and two companies being slow in unloading, were compelled to take out their gun-flints. The English had got deep into the town, when suddenly, on the discharge of a cannon, every roof swarmed with Spaniards and negroes. A rain of bullets came from every side on the surprised assailants. Guns opened with grape-shot from entrenched batteries dug across the streets, and with the avalanches of bricks and stones, hand-grenades mixed very unpleasantly. In vain Lieutenant-Colonel Duff forced his way into some houses after a severe struggle; he was surrounded and compelled to surrender. Lieutenant William Mackie, who afterwards led the forlorn hope at Rodrigo, was severely wounded; Lieutenant George Bury struck down a Spanish grenadier officer in single combat, but his enemy, in dying, bit Bury's middle finger off, bone and all. In this miserable affair the young Irish regiment lost two hundred and twenty privates killed and wounded, and twenty officers. The following day General Whitelock evacuated Buenos Ayres on the release of the captured regiments.

The colonel of the Eighty-eighth, General John Reid, dying in 1807, the senior lieutenant-colonel, W. Carr Beresford, succeeded him. In 1809, the regiment was sent to Lisbon, to join in driving the French out of Spain; and the battle of Talavera soon gave scope to its energies. In this great struggle, where sixteen thousand British troops engaged, and drove off, thirty thousand French, the Connaught Rangers did not fire a shot, but had nevertheless to bear patiently a heavy cannonade. Though half the soldiers were raw militia-men, they stood firm as the oldest veterans.

On the first day the Eighty-eighth held the wood on the river Alberche, and had to retire, with steady front, in line, under a heavy fire. During the retreat, the soldiers were forbidden to fire unless they could cover their men. Corporal Thomas Kelly, of the fourth company, was the first who pulled a trigger; going up to the adjutant, Lieutenant Stewart, and pointing out a French officer, he said :

"Do you see that officer, sir, standing by the olive-tree in front of me? He is a dangerous man, and has been giving directions to his soldiers that won't serve us; four of the company have been hit already; but if you will allow me, I think I could do for him."

"Try, then, Kelly," was the reply.

Kelly fired. The French officer fell, and the men, disconcerted by the loss of their leader, ceased to harass the regiment, which continued its retreat through the wood, and took post upon a hill on the left of the allied army, which was the key of the position.

The next day, the real battle day, the grenadiers of the Eighty-eighth, says Lieutenant Grattan, commanded by Captain Dunne, suffered a severe loss; but he, with immovable coolness, walked up and down in front of his company. When a man fell, he would turn round and ask his sergeant the name of the soldier struck down. At last a round shot passed through the ranks, and carried off the heads of two of the grenadiers.

"Who is that, now?" asked Dunne.

"Casey and Dumphy," was the reply of the sergeant.

"I am sorry for both, but particularly for Dumphy; he was in debt to the amount of four pounds fifteen shillings and ten pence."

The Eighty-eighth, on this glorious day, lost in killed and wounded six officers, and one hundred and thirty non-commissioned officers and privates. Captains Blake, Graydon, and Whittle, and Lieutenant M'Carthy were killed, and Lieutenant Whitelaw was wounded.

Hitherto this fiery regiment had had ill-luck. It could win no glory in Holland, it had had hard rubs in South America, and had not been able to join in the rush forward at Talavera; but its time had now come. The "boys," as the Rangers called themselves, were to blood their swords at Busaco. At the close of 1809, the Eighty-eighth were brigaded with the Forty-fifth and Seventy-fourth, and formed part of the Third Division, under the command of the famous Picton. The men of the Eighty-eighth had acquired a laxity of morals in Portugal, which caused the indignation of the stern Picton, who arrived determined to maintain discipline. In the first review of the division, the Eighty-eighth distinguished itself by its marching and echelon movements, upon which Colonel Wallace especially prided himself. But nothing could propitiate Picton. The parade was just about to be dismissed, when some Portuguese militia marched up two men of the Eighty-eighth, who had stolen a goat. They were at once tried by a drum-head court martial and (much to the indignation of the Eighty-eighth) flogged in the

presence of the whole division. The general, then turning to the Eighty-eighth, said :

" You are not known in the army by the name of the Connaught Rangers, but by the name of the Connaught foot-pads."

The Irish blood boiled at this. Colonel Wallace immediately communicated to Picton his sense of the injustice of his language, for which Picton afterwards apologised, saying he had found the corps much better than he had expected. It was about this time that Picton, one day riding near the river Coa with his aide-de-camp, saw, on the other side, a Connaught Ranger with a huge goat on his back.

" Pray, sir," said, or rather roared, Picton, addressing the soldier, " what have you got there ? "

" A thieving puckawn, sir."

" A what ? "

" A goat, sir," replied the soldier. " In Ireland we call a buck goat a puckawn. I found the poor baste straying, and he looks as if he was as hungry as myself."

" What are you going to do with him, sir ? " inquired Picton.

" Do with him, is it ? Bring him with me to be sure. Do you think I'd lave him here to starve ? "

" Ah, you villain ! you are at your old tricks, are you ? I know you, though you don't think it."

" And I know you, sir," answered the soldier, " and the 'boys of Connaught' know you too ; and I'd be sorry to do anything that would be displeasing to your honour ; and sure, iv you'd only let me, I'd send your sarvent a leg iv him to dhress for your dinner, for, by my soul ! your honour looks could and angry—hungry, I mane."

He then held up the old goat by the beard, and shook it at Captain Tyler, the general's aide-de-camp, and taking it for granted that he had made a peace-offering to the general, or probably not caring one straw whether he had or not, went away with his burden, and was soon lost sight of among a grove of chestnut-trees.

" Well," said Picton, turning to Tyler, who was nearly convulsed with laughter, " that fellow has some humour, and, like a good out-post soldier, has taken care to occupy an unassailable position."

This was always a favourite story of Picton's.

And now for Busaco. Massena, in the summer of 1810, had reduced Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, and was threaten-

ing to " drive the English leopards into the sea." Our Portuguese levies had not yet faced French fire. Our army lined a precipitous range of hills, on which stood the village and convent of Busaco—the old Second Division was on the right, Crawford and the Light Division on the left, the Third Division in the centre. At daylight a cloud of French skirmishers came up the ravines, followed by two French columns. On the left the intrepid Ney broke through the stinging swarms of English riflemen, and pushed up the ridge, soon to be pitchforked down again by the united bayonets of the Forty-third, Fifty-second, and Ninety-fifth, leaving many dead, and the French leader, General Simeon, and many officers and privates wounded.

In the mean time our left centre was struck at by General Regnier, and Massena's second corps. Picton's (the Third Division) had now to bear the brunt of the storm. The Eighty-eighth occupied the west of the sierra, near the left, not far from Wellington. Regnier advanced with a tremendous rush, his drummers beating the pas de charge, which our soldiers always called "old trowsers." Through the mountain mist crowds of sharpshooters ran forward, and spread in pairs. Our light troops were driven back. The French column was coming up fast. Colonel Wallace coolly reinforced the advance with two hundred men from each of his battalion companies, and kept the French in check, but again our light troops had to fall back. The French were rushing on with tremendous shouting, after their manner. Colonel Wallace then addressed the "boys," and said :

" The time, so long wished for by you and by me, is at length arrived. You have now an opportunity of distinguishing yourselves. Be cool, be steady, but, above all, pay attention to my word of command—you know it well. You see how these Frenchmen press on ; let them do so. When they rush a little nearer us, I will order you to advance to that mount. Look at it, lest you might mistake what I say. Now, mind what I tell you ; when you arrive at that spot, we will charge, and I have now only to add, the rest must be done by yourselves. Press on, then, to the muzzle, I say, Connaught Rangers. Press on the rascals ! "

The Eighty-eighth received this address, not with excited Celtic shouts, but with deep-drawn breath and ominous silence. Many men had already fallen. The colours

had been pierced by several bullets, and three of the colour-sergeants were wounded, when Captain Dunne came in and reported that not only was a French column advancing, but that a body of tirailleurs had occupied a cluster of rocks on the left, and more of the enemy were moving to cut in between the Eighty-eighth and the Forty-fifth. Colonel Wallace asked Captain Dunne if half the battalion could do the business.

"No," was the reply. "You will want every man you can bring forward."

"Very well," said the colonel, "I am ready. Soldiers, mind what I have said to you."

Colonel Wallace instantly threw the battalion into column right in front, and through a butchering fire reached the rocks, and filed out the grenadiers and two battalion companies, ordering them to carry the rocks while he tackled the main body. Four companies of the Forty-fifth were already almost annihilated, when the Eighty-eighth, with resistless fury, threw themselves on the French column of five regiments. They received one dreadful discharge of musketry. Before a second could be thrown in, they had pushed through the French column and hurled it down the mountain side, strewing the declivity with dead and dying. The "boys" had literally torn the French column to pieces. In the mean time the other three companies had cleared the rocks by a hard hand-to-hand grapple. The French, unable to escape, fought desperately. Captain Dansey was three times wounded, but he killed three Frenchmen, and Captain Dunne was on the very verge of death. He had made a fruitless cut at a rifleman above his head, the man's bayonet was a few inches from his heart, his finger on the trigger, when Dunne shouted, "Brazill!" the name of one of his sergeants. Brazill instantly sprang forward and pinned the Frenchman to the rock with his halberd, falling as he made the lunge which saved his captain. In the chasma and ledges after the battle the dead French riflemen were found, some apparently sleeping against crags, others leaning forward over projecting stones, as if firing, others dashed to pieces at the foot of precipices. Colonel Wallace, finding his charger restless, fought on foot. Captain Bury and Lieutenant L. Mackie especially distinguished themselves. Bury was wounded, but would not leave the field. One of his soldiers named Pollard, though shot through the shoulder, threw

off his knapsack, and fought beside his officers. A bullet piercing the plate of Pollard's cap, passed through his brain, and the faithful fellow fell dead at Bury's feet. Lieutenant Heppenstall (killed at Fox d'Aronce in 1811), a young officer, whose first appearance under fire was on this occasion, was frequently mixed with the enemy's riflemen, and shot two of them, one being an officer. Lieutenant William Nickle, serving with the light company, was deliberately singled out by a Frenchman, whose third shot passed through his body, but without killing him; as he was proceeding to the rear, the same Frenchman, cheering at the same time, sent a fourth shot after him, which knocked off his cap. "Get on, Nickle," said Heppenstall. "I'll stop that fellow's crowing." He waited quietly till the man appeared within sure distance, and then revenged his wounded comrade by shooting the Frenchman dead. Corporal Thomas Kelly of the fourth company (the same man who shot the French officer in the retreat through the wood near the Alberche at Talavera), was severely wounded in the thigh at the commencement of the charge against the French column, but he continued to run with his company down the hill, until he fell through exhaustion and loss of blood.

"If we were ever placed," says an officer of the regiment, "as we often were, in any critical situation, Colonel Wallace would explain to the soldiers what he expected them to do; if in danger of being charged by cavalry, he would say, 'Mind the square. You know I often told you that if ever you had to form it from line, in face of an enemy, you'd be in an ugly way, and have plenty of noise about you; mind the tellings off, and don't give the false touch to your right or left hand man; for if you were own brothers, you'll be running here and there like a parcel of frightened pullets!'"

Lord Wellington, who saw and fully appreciated the Busaco charge, rode up to the Eighty-eighth regiment, and seizing Colonel Wallace by the hand, said, "Upon my honour, Wallace, I never witnessed a more gallant charge than that just now made by your regiment." The dead and wounded of the Second, Fourth, Thirtysixth, and Irish Brigade (four French regiments which were opposed to the Eighty-eighth singly) lay thick on the face of the hill, and their numbers gave ample testimony that the Eighty-eighth deserved the praises bestowed upon them by their general.

The loss of the Eighty-eighth in this battle, so glorious to them, was nine officers and one hundred and twenty-four rank and file, killed or wounded. Whether the Eighty-eighth in these desperate charges raised the old faction-fight cry, so terrible to the enemy, of "Faugh a Ballagh"—"Clear the way"—we do not know, for it was the Eighty-seventh at Barossa who especially used that fierce war-cry, but we are sure that those rattling Irish tunes, Garryowen and I'm a Brisk Irish Lad, led them on in many a fight like this, and many a toilsome march over plain and sierra.

At Sabugal the Eighty-eighth got entangled in a storm of snow and hail, and Regnier's corps escaped them without crossing bayonets. The third and decisive day of Fuentes d'Onoro the fight was for a village with an old chapel on a crag at one end of it. The Highlanders were fighting in the churchyard, the Ninth French Light Infantry had already penetrated as far as the chapel, and were preparing to debouch upon our centre. Our troops were nearly worn out when Colonel Pakenham, always in the front, said :

"Tell Wallace of the Eighty-eighth to come down and drive these fellows back; he will do the thing properly."

The battalion advanced in columns by sections, left in front, in double quick time. The soldiers on each side the wall leading to the chapel cheered the regiment loudly as it advanced; but the Eighty-eighth gave no reply; there was no talking, no huzzzing; the men moved on smartly under a heavy fire, steady and silent as if on parade. Ensign Grattan, who led the first company, looked round anxiously at his men as the French came in view at the corner of the chapel. They were not pale, as soldiers usually are when going into close fight, but were flushed with the trot down the road. When he turned to look the men replied with a cheer that showed their hearts were swelling for the fight. A battery of eight pounders now opened upon them from an olive-grove on the other side of the river, and the Ninth regiment and some hundred veterans of the Imperial Guard rushed on them firing. The Eighty-eighth replied with a push of the bayonet, and drove the enemy through the streets into the river (one hundred and fifty of the Imperial Guard were shot and bayoneted in one cul-de-sac); for there was no time for reflection, and the fire was hot. Captain Muir, of the Eighty-eighth, was peeping over a

wall with his glass to his eye, when a bullet struck him in the forehead. Many of the French soldiers hid in the chimneys. Lieutenant George Johnson, when the place was cleared, climbed up to the top of a stone cross in a square on the river-side, and waved his hat in defiance of the enemy. After all, the regiment lost fewer men than was expected; every one was so steady, and the men were so rapid in closing with the enemy. One officer was killed and four wounded, while seven rank and file were shot, and fifty-three wounded.

Says an officer of the Rangers: "It was the fashion with some to think that the Eighty-eighth were a parcel of wild, rattling rascals, ready for a row, but loosely officered. The direct contrary was the fact. Perhaps in the whole British army there was not one regiment so severely drilled. If a man coughed in the ranks he was punished; if the sling of the firelock, for an instant, left the hollow of the shoulder when it should not, he was punished; and if he moved his knapsack when standing at ease, he was punished, more or less, of course, according to the offence. The consequence of this system, exclusively Colonel Wallace's, was that the men never had the appearance of being fatigued upon a march, and when they halted, you did not see them thrusting their firelocks against their packs to support them. Poor Bob Hardyman, of the Forty-fifth, said the reason the Connaught Rangers carried their packs better than any other regiment was, 'that they never had anything in them,' and, to speak candidly, we never had more than was necessary, and in truth it was very little that satisfied our fellows." It was falsely asserted that the Rangers sold their cartridges for aguardiente, and substituted in their place pieces of painted wood. Nevertheless it must be allowed that the Connaught men were not over-scrupulous in the matter of a stray pig or goat, and were known on festive occasions to boil geese in (what we fear we must call) stolen Catalonian wine.

At the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, the Rangers had fighting enough, even for Irishmen. The forlorn hope was to be led by a subaltern of the Eighty-eighth. Directly Major Thompson (then commander) told his officers this, Lieutenant Mackie stepped forward, dropped his sword, and said :

"Major, I am ready for the service."

"Go, then," replied the major, "pressing his hand, "go, and God bless you!"

There was then a rush among the Eighty-eighth to get chosen for the twenty of the forlorn hope, and great difficulty arose in selection. The Light Division was to attack the small breach, the Third Division the grand breach. Picton's speech was very brief:

"Rangers of Connaught. It is not my intention to expend any powder this evening. We will do this business with cold iron."

"The first," says Grattan, "who reached the top after the last discharge, were three of the Eighty-eighth. Sergeant Pat Brazil—the brave Brazill of the grenadier company, who saved his captain's life at Busaco—called out to his two companions, Swan and Kelly, to unscrew their bayonets and follow him; the three men passed the trench in a moment, and engaged the French gunners hand to hand—a terrific but short combat was the consequence. Swan was the first, and was met by the two gunners on the right of the gun; but, no way daunted, he engaged them, and plunged his bayonet into the breast of one; he was about to repeat the blow upon the other, but before he could disentangle the weapon from his bleeding adversary, the second Frenchman closed upon him, and with a sabre cut severed his left arm from his body a little above the elbow; he fell from the shock, and was on the point of being massacred, when Kelly, after having scrambled under the gun, rushed onward to succour his comrade. He bayoneted two Frenchmen on the spot, and at this instant Brazill came up—three of the five gunners lay lifeless, while Swan, resting against an ammunition chest, was bleeding to death. It was now equal numbers, two against two, but Brazill, in his over anxiety to engage, was near losing his life at the onset; in making a lunge at the man next him, his foot slipped upon the bloody platform, and he fell forward against his antagonist, but as both rolled under the gun, Brazill felt the socket of his bayonet strike hard against the buttons of the Frenchman's coat. The remaining gunner, in attempting to escape under the carriage from Kelly, was killed by some soldiers of the Fifth, who then now reached the top of the breach, and seeing the serious dispute at the gun, pressed forward to the assistance of the three men of the Connaught Rangers."

Lieutenant Faris was engaged during the assault in a desperate hand-to-hand conflict. Two French grenadiers, observ-

ing him far in advance of his men, attacked him. One fired and immediately ran away, his bullet passing through the lieutenant's coat; the other then fired, wounding him slightly in the thigh, and closed upon him with the bayonet, making a thrust at the body. Lieutenant Faris parried this with his sabre, but received a severe wound in the leg; a struggle then took place, from which Lieutenant Faris at length succeeded in disengaging himself, and killed his adversary by a sabre-cut on the head. By this time he was completely exhausted, and was obliged to be carried into a neighbouring house. His wounds, though severe, were neither of them dangerous, and he soon recovered.

There was an unpleasant dispute after this siege between Lieutenant Mackie of the Eighty-eighth and Lieutenant Gurwood of the Fifty-second, as to who first received the governor's sword; but there is no doubt that the governor gave his sword to Gurwood, who led the forlorn hope at the lesser breach.

At Badajoz a detachment of the fiery Eighty-eighth was commanded by Captain Oates and Lieutenant Johnson (wounded at Ciudad Rodrigo.) Oates, in one of the attacks, seeing that the ditch though deep was narrow, cleverly threw three ladders across from the glacis into the mouth of an embrasure in the midst of a pelting fire of musketry and grape. He fell in the redoubt severely wounded, and Lieutenant Johnston was shot dead. Of fifteen officers only one escaped unhurt. In the final escalade Lieutenant Whitelaw fell while leading the advance. Captain Lindsay was killed while raising a ladder. Three other lieutenants perished, and one captain and four lieutenants were wounded. In the whole siege the regiment lost eight officers, five sergeants, and forty-two rank and file, while one hundred and eighty-four men were wounded.

An officer of the Eighty-eighth has described the men's talk round their camp-kettles, as he lay in his tent wounded after Badajoz: "Well," said one boy, "now it's all past and gone, wasn't it the devil's own dthrroll business, the taking that same place; and wasn't Long-nose" (meaning the Duke of Wellington) "a quare lad to sthrive to get into it, seeing how it was defended? It was he that spoke to the 'boys' dacently. 'Well, boys,' says he, when he met myself and a few more aising a house of a thrifle, 'well, boys,' (for he knew the button), 'God bless your

work. It's myself that's proud to think how completely yees tuck the concate out ov the French Eighty-eighth in the castel last night.' 'Why, sir,' says I, forgetting to call him my lord, 'the devil a French Connaught Ranger ever was born that the Irish Connaught Rangers isn't able to take the concate out ov.'

The battle of Salamanca (1812) was a great day for the Rangers, who were chosen to carry the height and guns.

"When the Third Division, under Packenham," says an eye-witness, "had crossed the flat, and were moving against the crest of hill occupied by Thomier's tirailleurs, a number of Caçadores, commanded by Major Haddock, were in advance of us. The moment the French fire opened, these troops, which had been placed to cover our advance, lay down on their faces, not for the purpose of taking aim more accurately, but in order to save their own sconces from the French fire. Haddock dismounted from his horse, and began belabouring with the flat side of his sabre the dastardly troops he had the misfortune to command, but in vain; all sense of shame had fled after the first discharge of grape and musketry, and poor Haddock might as well have attempted to move the great cathedral of Salamanca as the soldiers of His Majesty the King of Portugal.

"At this time a colonel of the Twenty-second French regiment stepped out of the ranks, and shot Major Murphy dead at the head of his regiment, the Eighty-eighth. A number of officers were beside Murphy. It is not easy at such a moment to be certain who is the person singled out. The two officers who carried the colours of the regiment, and who were immediately in the rear of the mounted officers, thought that the shot was intended for one of them. Lieutenant Moriarty, carrying the regimental flag, called out:

"'That fellow is aiming at me.'

"'I hope so,' replied Lieutenant D'Arcy, who carried the other colour, with great coolness; 'I hope so, for I thought he had me covered.'

D'Arcy was not much mistaken. The ball that killed Murphy, after passing through him, struck the staff of the flag carried by D'Arcy, and also carried away the button and part of the strap of his epaulet. This fact is not told as an extraordinary occurrence, that the ball which killed one man should strike the coat of him who happened to stand in his rear, for such casualties were by no means un-

common with us; but I mention it as a strong proof of the great coolness of the British line in their advance against the enemy's column."

At the battle of the Pyrenees a French reinforcement, commanded by an officer of distinction, rushed forward to retrieve the tarnished honour of their nation. A detachment of the Eighty-eighth lay behind a low ditch, and waited until the French approached to within a few yards of them. They came on in gallant style, headed by their brave commanding officer, who was most conspicuous, being several paces in front of his men. The soldiers of the two armies, posted at a distance, and lookers on at this national trial, shouted with joy as they beheld their respective comrades on the eve of engaging with each other. But this feeling on the part of the French was but of short duration, for at the first fire their detachment turned tail, leaving their brave commandant, with many others, mortally wounded, behind. Captain Robert Nickle at once ran up to his bleeding opponent, and rendered him every assistance in his power. He then advanced alone, with his handkerchief tied on the point of his sword, which he held up as a token of amity, and, thus reassured, some of the French soldiers returned without their weapons, and carried away their officer with them. They were delighted with the considerate conduct of Captain Nickle, and embraced our men on parting.

At the battle of Orthes, the Eighty-eighth fought tremendously, and killed, wounded, or took prisoners a large body of French cavalry, whose charge they had repulsed. In this affair the regiment had two hundred and seventy-seven men killed or wounded; and at Toulouse, though only three companies were engaged, they also gained much honour.

At the peace of 1814, the Eighty-eighth was ordered to Canada, and justly boasted of never losing one man by desertion during a stay of eleven months. In the Peninsula, however occasionally irregular, the Eighty-eighth was always famed for gay endurance of hardships, and an absence of deserters. In six years, says the regimental chronicler, this young regiment lost forty-three officers, twenty-eight of whom died in the field, and the rest from wounds, fatigue, or climate, and its loss in the same time of non-commissioned officers and privates amounted to two thousand, yet owing to the prejudice of Picton, who never recommended an officer of the Eighty-eighth, their brilliant

services did not obtain for the regimental colours the glorious word "Pyrenees"—an honour it had so richly deserved.

NOTES OR GOLD?

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "FATAL ZERO," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLV. WILL GARDINER IN THE FORTRESS.

WILL GARDINER came out much excited, and in a glow of generous enthusiasm, such as is popularly supposed to attend on the performance of a noble action. He felt a little chill as he met the expectant face of his wife, and remembered that he had come away without performing the task which he had undertaken. Still he had succeeded to a certain extent.

"Well," she said, eagerly, "it is all settled? Is it time?"

"The poor fellow," said Will, full of sympathy, "he is as helpless as a child. But I am afraid of that Spooner and his gang."

"Afraid! Nonsense, are you a child? You are not such a baby as to—"

"No, I hope not. But the fellow has thrown off the mask, taken the airs of a bully, put his foot down, and all that. He said as good as that he would fight to hold his place."

"And you—you will surely not let yourself be put down by a bully of his sort. Go back at once, and take possession."

"I am going back," said Will, mulishly. "You need not talk in that way. Not that I think it will be worth our while taking much trouble about the poor fellow. He said something about the money being all gone, or that he had none left; but, by Jove! he contradicted himself afterwards, for he talked of leaving it all to the animals. I don't understand it."

"I do, then, perfectly. It proves that his mind is rambling—that he can't fix it on one idea."

"No, he is not rambling," said Will. "But still he certainly told me two different stories."

"All old women's tales. He is an artful old schemer, and wants to trick us all round. Go back at once, or they will steal a march upon you. Get your things and take possession, and don't let them move you an inch from the spot. You know the state we are in, and that we can't afford to wait a day. Show that you have some sense or wit, and more brains

than the miserable crew who are in this place. I know that old men with money take a malicious delight in trying to humbug people about. Show that you can humbug him."

Will Gardiner had never heard his wife speak to him with such energy before. It overpowered him, and he felt from that moment that she had a strength of mind and a will that was superior to his own. However, he did not make any open protest; but retired silently, determined to carry out his own little plan. For it happily so fell out, that he could do so according to the letter of his instructions, though not after their spirit.

"I'll not raise a finger against the poor old fellow—if I can help it," he added, putting in a useful qualification.

Late that night he returned with a modest carpet-bag, and presented himself at the door. While he waited, he was preparing for a violent rush, and some vigorous bluster, in anticipation of serious resistance; but, to his surprise, he found that the "Gorgon sister," as he was fond of styling her, welcomed his entrance, and allowed him to pass. She even led the way up-stairs.

"This is the room I have got ready for you," she said, opening a door. "Mr. Doughty wishes that you should be made comfortable."

Will Gardiner looked at her with suspicion.

"Why, what does this mean, ma'am?" he said. "The wind looks as though it were changed."

"Not at all," she said, coldly. "My brother thinks it is not prudent, considering Mr. Doughty's state, to oppose any wish of his. He told you he did not intend to take any further share of responsibility—after to-morrow, at least."

Mr. Gardiner was not quite satisfied with these explanations, but established himself in his new room, and then repaired to Mr. Doughty's, where he was welcomed.

That gentleman was wonderfully restored. Nay, he seemed almost well again. The sense of the peril in which he stood seemed to have driven away all feeling of ailment. But his eyes burned with an angry glow of indignation against the wretches who were closing in round him. He had an eagerness to defeat their purpose. Long the two sat together, and when they wished each other good-night, Mr. Gardiner went his way with a wondering expression.

"Was there ever such a turn?" he said to himself. "No matter, I'll stand by Old Doughty to the end and see the finish."

CHAPTER XLVI. THE DUEL.

THE following morning was to usher in a day of momentous excitement for the various actors in the Brickford drama.

Early that morning a new guest had arrived at Crockley's Family Hotel. This was known to be one Doctor Craggs, who came without luggage, save indeed a sort of professional hand-bag, which might contain papers, or surgical instruments, or shaving materials. He was a quick-eyed gentleman, with a sort of treasury clerk manner.

By-and-bye, Doctor Spooner came to call, and was shown up to his room. Later arrived Lady Duke with her husband, and Mr. Birkenshaw the solicitor.

Waiters, boots, and chambermaid wondered at the little gathering outside the family hotel. Two stout men, each chewing a straw, loitered, as if waiting instructions. The party remained up-stairs for half an hour, and then all descended together. Lady Duke's carriage was waiting, but a fly was called, in which the two doctors seated themselves with Mr. Birkenshaw. Lady Duke and her husband entered their own carriage. The hour had come. The combined assault on the luckless Doughty was ready for execution.

It so happened that Mr. Nagle, very forlorn and draggled, was wandering past the family hotel door, and was attracted by the sort of little cavalcade now about setting forth. He noted the strange figure that was seated by "that Spooner," and the singular and almost ominous attendance of Lady Duke and husband in the other carriage. He hurried up to the first conveyance, and caught hold of its door-handle.

"I say, where are you going—what d'ye mean? What's to do?"

"Nothing," said Doctor Spooner, quietly. "Pray don't detain us."

"But where are ye going?" said Mr. Nagle, gesticulating with one hand, but retaining the door-handle with the other. "I insist on knowing. There's some villainy or scheming, I know, to be carried out at that poor fellow's house."

"Hush! hush!" said the doctor, looking round in alarm, for a crowd was gathering. "Don't make a noise here—go away."

"I shall not go away. I see the whole conspiracy now. I shall get the police in;

the law shall interfere. I am not going to have myself and my daughter swindled out of their just rights in this way."

"Look here," said the doctor, stooping down to speak in a low voice, "don't make a disturbance. If you wish you can come with us. I assure you everything will be done properly and legally. If you desire to satisfy your suspicions, you are welcome to attend. There!"

Mr. Nagle looked at him suspiciously. Then, with a fresh protest, opened the carriage door irresolutely, and took his place in the carriage. The party then drove away to Mr. Doughty's.

They went up-stairs, and found the owner sitting at his desk, busy with his papers. His friend Will Gardiner was in the room. A few moments later arrived the general, who entered not a little flattered. There was a look of good-humoured enjoyment on Mr. Doughty's face, and he did not seem in the least disturbed.

"What a large party," he said, as they entered. "To what do I owe this gathering? Are you all anxious about my health. I am much better, I assure you—all but restored."

"You think you are," said Doctor Spooner, who now spoke in a hard determined fashion. "But it is my duty to tell you that your friends are not satisfied as to your state. With this view, they have desired that you should be seen by a physician of more eminence than the humble individual who has been attending you."

"I am quite in my senses," said the patient, "if that be what you mean—though I do not owe that to the friends who have been kindly looking after me. I see no spectres at night, though I have been subject to delusions."

"That is a good sign," said Doctor Craggs. "So far so good."

"So far so good," said Mr. Doughty. "Perhaps those about me have been under greater delusions. They may have thought me interesting, captivating, wise, good, and beautiful; all because I had money. Now, curious as it may seem, all this time I HAVE HAD NO MONEY!"

The whole party started, then exchanged looks.

"Not a shilling that I can call my own. I have been like those travelling swindlers that visit towns like this, and obtain goods, and attentions, and considerations under false pretences, sometimes, indeed, going so far as to win the affections of a beautiful girl under the same false pretences. The

parallel exactly holds. You are welcome to arrest me, and carry me away to prison, for this offence; for I own to being guilty, though not with malice aforethought."

Again all the party looked at each other, Doctor Spooner glancing at his colleague with considerable satisfaction.

"I think," said he, "we need not remain. Doctor Craggs would wish to see you in private for a few moments; then we shall give you no more trouble."

Will had remained silent during this interview.

"I shall wait," he said, "as Mr. Doughty's friend, for no one here can be considered as answering to that description."

Doctor Spooner answered him in a peremptory way:

"You must not interpose here, Mr. Gardiner. It will not be tolerated, I can assure you."

"Go, Gardiner," said the patient, or victim; "leave me with these gentlemen. They will not do me any harm. I have no money, recollect. Vacuus cantabit."

Will Gardiner retired. Outside he found Lady Duke waiting, with eager face. Then all went down to the drawing-room, except the two doctors. Will could not contain himself. He went to the window, saw the carriage waiting, and the suspicious-looking men hanging about.

"You have laid your plans well," he said. "It has been an infamous scheme from beginning to end. But don't think you will succeed, Lady Duke. If I were to work every court in the kingdom, I'll circumvent you and your gang."

"I have no doubt that you will try," she said, calmly. "But I think after to-day there can be no doubt of the man's state. You heard him yourself deny that he had any money."

"Yes I did. Some of his sarcastic jesting. I've heard plenty of rich people deny they had money."

"I'll raise the whole town," said Mr. Nagle, whose protest had a certain feebleness after the more hearty one of Will Gardiner. "It's monstrous—vile!"

Down came the two doctors very hurriedly.

"We must lose no time," said Doctor Spooner. "You are satisfied on this

examination, Doctor Craggs, that Mr. Doughty is of unsound mind?"

"I think he is under some delusion at present, and that he has received a sudden shock. He had clearly set his affections on a particular object, and by dwelling too much on that subject, has become unsettled. Restraint in a proper place and supervision are absolutely necessary, and I am prepared to sign a certificate."

"Then," said Doctor Spooner, "we had better call up the people."

"I can't see this done," said Will Gardiner, vehemently. "I oppose it, and shall oppose it to the death. He shan't be taken from his own house in this way. Call up your fellows, and if one of them dares to go up to that bedroom, I'll fling him over the banisters. So now look out."

"You will oppose us in this step, which his relations have sanctioned?" the doctor said, looking at him fixedly.

"Tooth and nail, hand and foot," said Will, defiantly. "I promised to stand by him, and I shall. He is sick and weak, and doesn't know what you would do to him."

"Good, good," said the other. "I merely wanted to know your intentions. You can begin your opposition when you please; but you will be sorry for it."

Mr. Gardiner strode out promptly, and with an elation in his face. He walked down-stairs to the hall, and threw open the door.

At once a hand was laid upon his shoulder, a piece of paper thrust into his face, and a gruff voice said something about "a copy." But the universal language in which "arrest" is spoken was intelligible. The bill of sale—the fruits of the old extravagance—rushed upon him, and showed him the whole story.

Without a moment's delay he was put into a cab, and taken away. And thus Mr. Doughty was delivered into the hands of his enemies, who were looking from the window.

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MOST CERTAIN PRESERVER OF HEALTH,
A MILD, YET SPEEDY, SAFE, AND
EFFECTUAL AID IN CASES OF INDIGESTION
AND ALL STOMACH COMPLAINTS,
AND, AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE,
A PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD, & SWEETENER OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power of the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter, for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable ; for it is very certain, that if we could always keep the stomach right we should only die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations ; amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an inordinate appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a distension or feeling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pain in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels : in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the stated period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification ; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance ; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some time to calm and collect themselves ; yet for

all this the mind is exhilarated without much difficulty ; pleasing events, society, will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease ; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment ; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each ; but be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach ; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems—nothing can more speedily, or with more certainty, effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste, and a pleasing degree of warmth and strength to the stomach ; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it

OBSERVATIONS ON INDIGESTION.

takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers and which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of Camomile Flowers ; and, when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea ; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine must be injurious ; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with Camomile Flowers, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed ; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstance, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of Norton's Camomile Pills, it is only doing them justice to say, that they are really the

most valuable of all TONIC MEDICINES. By the word tonic is meant a medicine which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body, which so quickly follows the use of Norton's Camomile Pills, their certain and speedy effects in repairing the partial dilapidations from time or intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion ; as such, their general use is strongly recommended as a preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick rooms they are invaluable, as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness, even under the most trying circumstances.

As Norton's Camomile Pills are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with practical essays on diet, as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more, did we not feel it our duty to make the humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesome, and are governed by the opinion of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid : we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native

production ; if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by their use ; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess ; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach ; and, that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed ; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed ; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may at once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with or sits unpleasantly on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing, a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever so often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's*

Camomile Pills, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the burden thus imposed upon it that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal : it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter ; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should immediately be sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether ; no better friend can be found—no, none which will perform the task with greater certainty than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted, and it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these **PILLS** should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted, that by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy **OLD AGE**.

On account of their volatile properties, they must be kept in bottles ; and if closely corked their qualities are neither impaired by time nor injured by any change of climate whatever. Price, 13*½*d. and 2*s*. 9*d*. each, with full directions. The large bottle contains the quantity of three small ones, or **PILLS** equal to fourteen ounces of **CAMOMILE FLOWERS**.

Sold by nearly all respectable Medicine Vendors.

Be particular to ask for "**NORTON'S PILLS**," and
do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

A CLEAR COMPLEXION !!!

—♦♦♦—

GODFREY'S EXTRACT OF ELDER FLOWERS

Is strongly recommended for Softening, Improving, Beautifying, and Preserving the SKIN, and giving it a blooming and charming appearance. It will completely remove Tan, Sunburn, Redness, &c., and by its Balsamic and Healing qualities render the skin soft, pliable, and free from dryness, &c., clear it from every humour, pimple, or eruption; and by continuing its use only a short time, the skin will become and continue soft and smooth, and the complexion perfectly clear and beautiful.

Sold in Bottles, price 2s. 9d., by all Medicine Vendors and Perfumers.

STEEDMAN'S SOOTHING POWDERS, FOR CHILDREN CUTTING TEETH.

THE value of this Medicine has been largely tested in all parts of the world and by all grades of society for upwards of fifty years.

Its extensive sale has induced **spurious imitations**, some of which, in outward appearance, so closely resemble the Original as easily to deceive even careful observers. The Proprietor therefore feels it due to the Public to give a **special caution** against the purchase of such imitations.

All purchasers are therefore requested carefully to observe that the words "**JOHN STEEDMAN, Chemist, Walworth, Surrey,**" are engraved on the Government Stamp affixed to each Packet, **in White Letters on a Red Ground**, without which none are genuine. The true STEEDMAN is spelt with **two EEs**.

Prepared only at Walworth, Surrey, and Sold by all Chemists and Medicine Vendors in Packets, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each.

Scottish Provident Institution.

TABLE OF PREMIUMS, BY DIFFERENT MODES OF PAYMENT,
For Assurance of £100 at Death—With Profits.

Age next Birth- day.	Annual Premium pay- able during Life.	ANNUAL PREMIUM LIMITED TO			Single Payment.	Age next Birth- day.
		Twenty-one Payments.	Fourteen Payments.	Seven Payments.		
21	£1 16 3	£2 10 6	£3 4 11	£5 10 0	£33 0 1	21
22	1 16 9	2 11 0	3 5 9	5 11 0	33 5 10	22
23	1 17 2	2 11 6	3 6 5	5 12 1	33 11 2	23
24	1 17 7	2 12 1	3 6 11	5 13 1	33 16 5	24
25	1 18 0	2 12 6	3 7 3	5 14 0	34 2 0	25
26	1 18 6	2 13 0	3 7 10	5 14 11	34 8 2	26
27	1 19 2	2 13 6	3 8 7	5 15 11	34 16 1	27
28	1 19 11	2 14 1	3 9 5	5 17 1	35 4 9	28
29	2 0 8	2 14 8	3 10 3	5 18 6	35 14 1	29
*30	2 1 6	2 15 4	3 11 2	6 0 1	36 4 0	*30
31	2 2 6	2 16 2	3 12 1	6 1 10	36 14 6	31
32	2 3 5	2 17 1	3 13 2	6 3 8	37 5 5	32
33	2 4 6	2 18 0	3 14 4	6 5 8	37 17 2	33
34	2 5 7	2 19 0	3 15 7	6 7 9	38 9 7	34
35	2 6 10	3 0 2	3 16 11	6 10 0	39 2 9	35
36	2 8 2	3 1 5	3 18 4	6 12 5	39 16 11	36
37	2 9 8	3 2 9	3 19 11	6 15 0	40 12 4	37
38	2 11 3	3 4 3	4 1 7	6 17 9	41 8 7	38
39	2 12 11	3 5 9	4 3 4	7 0 7	42 5 4	39
+40	2 14 9	3 7 5	4 5 2	7 8 7	43 2 10	+40
41	2 16 8	3 9 2	4 7 2	7 6 8	44 0 11	41
42	2 18 8	3 11 1	4 9 3	7 9 11	44 19 9	42
43	3 0 11	3 13 1	4 11 5	7 13 3	45 19 3	43
44	3 3 3	3 15 3	4 13 10	7 16 9	46 19 7	44
45	3 5 9	3 17 6	4 16 4	8 0 7	48 0 8	45
46	3 8 5	4 0 0	4 19 1	8 4 6	49 2 8	46
47	3 11 5	4 2 8	5 2 1	8 8 8	50 5 8	47
48	3 14 8	4 5 8	5 5 4	8 13 2	51 9 7	48
49	3 18 1	4 8 9	5 8 9	8 17 11	52 14 1	49
50	4 1 7	4 12 1	5 12 4	9 2 10	53 19 3	50
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52	4 9 5	4 18 10	5 19 11	9 13 1	56 9 0	52
53	4 13 5	5 2 5	6 3 11	9 18 3	57 12 11	53
54	4 17 8	5 6 3	6 8 0	10 3 5	58 17 2	54
55	5 1 11	5 10 2	6 12 1	10 8 6	60 0 8	55
56	5 6 4	.....	6 14 9	10 13 7	61 3 8	56
57	5 10 11	.....	6 18 8	10 18 8	62 6 5	57
58	5 15 9	....	7 2 9	11 3 10	63 9 4	58
59	6 1 0	....	7 7 3	11 9 0	64 12 11	59
60	6 6 7	....	7 12 0	11 14 3	65 16 9	60

[These Rates are about as low as the usual non-participating Rates.]

* A person of 30 may thus secure £1000 at Death, by a yearly payment, during life, of £20:15s. This Premium, if paid to any other of the Scottish Mutual Offices, would secure £900 only, instead of £1000.

OR, if unwilling to burden himself with payments during his whole life, he may secure the same sum of £3000 by twenty-one yearly payments of £27:13:4—being thus free of payment after age 50.

† At age 40 the Premium ceasing at age 60, is, for £1000, £33:14:2, being about the same as most Offices require to be paid during the whole term of life.

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THIS OFFICE alone combines the advantages of *Mutual Assurance* with *Moderate Premiums*.

THE PREMIUMS are so moderate that at most ages an assurance of £1200 or £1250 may be secured from the first for the same yearly payment which would elsewhere assure £1000 only.

The whole PROFITS go to the Policyholders, on a system at once safe, equitable, and favourable to good lives—no share being given to those by whose early death there is a loss. The effect of reserving the surplus for the survivors (who will, however, comprise more than half the members) has been that policies which shared at three investigations have already been increased from £1000—to £1400, £1600, and even to £1800.

The FUNDS are securely invested, chiefly on mortgage of lands and other non-fluctuating securities. The amount—above **Two Millions**—is larger (notwithstanding the lowness of the premiums) than in any Office in the Kingdom of the same age.

Table of Premiums, by different scales, on other side.

Full STATEMENTS of PRINCIPLES will be found in the ANNUAL REPORTS.

EDINBURGH, Feb. 1873.

JAMES WATSON, Manager.

1873

* BONUS YEAR *

SCOTTISH WIDOWS FUND

LIFE ASSURANCE
* SOCIETY. *

ABUNDANTIA



PRUDENIA



The Surplus
AT
LAST DIVISION
IN 1866

EXCEEDED

£ 800,000

ACCUMULATED
FUND

FIVE MILLIONS AND A HALFB

STERLING

THOSE WHO EFFECT ASSURANCES BEFORE
* 31st DECEMBER 1873 *
WILL SHARE IN THE SURPLUS OF THE SEVEN YEARS THEN ENDING.

THE POLICYHOLDERS SHARE AMONG THEM THE WHOLE PROFITS.

HEAD OFFICE, ST. ANDREW SQUARE,
EDINBURGH.

SAMUEL RALEIGH, *Manager.*
J. J. P. ANDERSON, *Secretary.*

THE NORTH BRITISH Scottish Widows' Fund.

Leading Results for Year 1872.

1. New Business, over - - -	£1,200,000	0	0
2. Revenue—Premiums and Interest	690,000	0	0
3. Claims on death of Assured - - -	355,000	0	0
4. Balance of the Year forming increase of the Funds - - -	269,000	0	0
5. Total Funds now in hand - - -	5,590,000	0	0

The general indications on which a very satisfactory Bonus may be anticipated at the end of the current period are manifest in the great progress and continued prosperity of the Society.

THE NEW ASSURANCES

For six years (1867-72) exceed those transacted in corresponding years of preceding period, as follows:—

PRECEDING PERIOD.	PRESENT PERIOD.
1860 £380,305	1867 £811,410
1861 374,599	1868 711,608
1862 666,834	1869 732,377
1863 882,485	1870 965,627
1864 876,349	1871 1,091,205
1865 1,045,497	1872 over 1,200,000

Total Increase in present period, £1,286,158.

Every element of Stability, Economy, and Profit

IS COMBINED IN

THE CONSTITUTION, WORKING, AND RESULTS OF THE SOCIETY.

The BONUS YEAR, 1873,
now current, is a favourable time for
effecting new assurances.

BRANCH OFFICES,

London, 28 CORNHILL.—West End Agency, 49 Pall Mall.

Dublin, 9 LOWER SACKVILLE STREET.

Glasgow, 114 WEST GEORGE STREET.

Manchester, 39 CROSS STREET, KING STREET.

Liverpool, 48 AND 50 CASTLE STREET.

Birmingham, 29 BENNETT'S HILL.

Norwich, 48 ST. GILES' CHURCH PLAIN.

Leeds, 21 PARK ROW.

Bristol, 22 COLLEGE GREEN.

Belfast, 2 HIGH STREET.

Newcastle, GRAINGER STREET, W.

Dundee, 53 REFORM STREET.

Also Agencies in most Towns within the United Kingdom



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PROTECTION FROM FIRE

BRYANT & MAY'S Patent Safety MATCHES.



LIGHT ONLY ON THE BOX.

KEATING'S PERSIAN INSECT DESTROYING POWDER,

As supplied to H.M. Government Clothing Department.

THIS Powder is quite *harmless* to animal life, but is unrivalled in destroying Fleas, Bugs, Flies, Cockroaches, Beetles, Gnats, Mosquitos, Moths in furs, and every other species of Insect. SPORTSMEN will find this an invaluable remedy for destroying FLEAS IN THEIR DOGS, as also *Ladies* for their Pet Dogs. Being the Original Importer of this now invaluable article, which has found so great a sale that it has tempted others to vend a so-called article in imitation; the Public are therefore cautioned to observe that the Packets of the Genuine Powder bear the autograph of THOMAS KEATING.

Sold in Packets, 1s.; Tins, 2s. 6d. and 4s. 6d. each; or 1s. Packets, free by post, for 14 Postage Stamps, and 2s. 6d. on receipt of 5s, by

THOMAS KEATING, Chemist,
79, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON, E.C.

KEATING'S

(CHILDREN'S)

WORM TABLETS.

A PURELY VEGETABLE SWEETMEAT, both in appearance and taste, furnishing a most agreeable method of administering the only certain remedy for INTESTINAL OR THREAD WORMS. It is a perfectly safe and mild preparation, and is especially adapted for Children.

Sold by all Druggists in Tins, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 6d. each. Put up in small boxes "specially" for post, which will be forwarded on receipt of 15 Stamps.

THOMAS KEATING,
79, St. Paul's Churchyard, London, E.C.

ELECTRICITY IS LIFE

PULVERMACHER'S IMPROVED PATENT GALVANIC CHAIN BANDS, BELTS, AND BATTERIES.

A self applicable curative, perfectly harmless, and vastly superior to noxious medicines or other remedies.

Though externally applied it has an internal action, physiologically, physically, and chemically upon the system, assisting nature to re-establish the normal balance of health and vigour, as witness the remarkable cures daily effected in cases of RHEUMATISM, NEURALGIA, GOUT, DEAFNESS, HEAD AND TOOTH ACHE, PARALYSIS, NERVOUS DEBILITY, and Functional Derangements, &c., by means of PULVERMACHER'S GALVANIC APPLIANCES, when all other remedies have failed.

A few of the daily increasing number of testimonials communicated by grateful patients are reproduced in the pamphlet "Nature's Chief Restorer of Impaired Vital Energy," post free on application to

J. L. Pulvermacher's Galvanic Establishment, 168, Regent Street, London, W.

G. H. JONES, D. D. S.,

Supplies ARTIFICIAL TEETH at prices much less than the usual charges of the profession, being the actual Maker. These Teeth are guaranteed to fit perfectly, masticate with ease, and last a lifetime.

Sets from 1 to 10 Guineas.



Note.—Painless Dentistry—Nitrous oxide Gas administered daily by G. H. JONES, Doctor of Dental Surgery, with the greatest success, for the painless extraction of Teeth.

N.B.—"DENTISTRY: its Use and Abuse," by G. H. JONES, price 2s. 6d. (explain the Author's system), may be had of ELLIOT STOCK, Paternoster Row, or of any Bookseller in the Kingdom.

CONSULTATION FREE,

HOURS FROM 10 TILL 5, AT

57, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, OPPOSITE THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

J. & J. COLMAN

MUSTARD MANUFACTURERS

TO THE QUEEN

BY SPECIAL

WARRANT

AWARDS AT THE

MOSCOW EXHIBITION, 1872.

GRAND GOLD MEDAL FOR STARCH

GRAND GOLD MEDAL FOR MUSTARD

GRAND SILVER MEDAL

FOR BRITISH CORN-FLOUR.

AND THE

HONORARY AWARD OF THE FIRST CLASS CATEGORY
BEING THE

HIGHEST PRIZE

OF THE EXHIBITION &

SIGNED BY H.H. THE GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE

GRAND GOLD MEDAL, MUSTARD



MOSCOW, 1872.

TRADE
MARK



AWARDS ONLY MEDALS

BULL'S
HEAD.



DUBLIN, 1872.



LONDON, 1867.



DUBLIN, 1865.



PARIS, 1867.
HIGHEST AWARD.

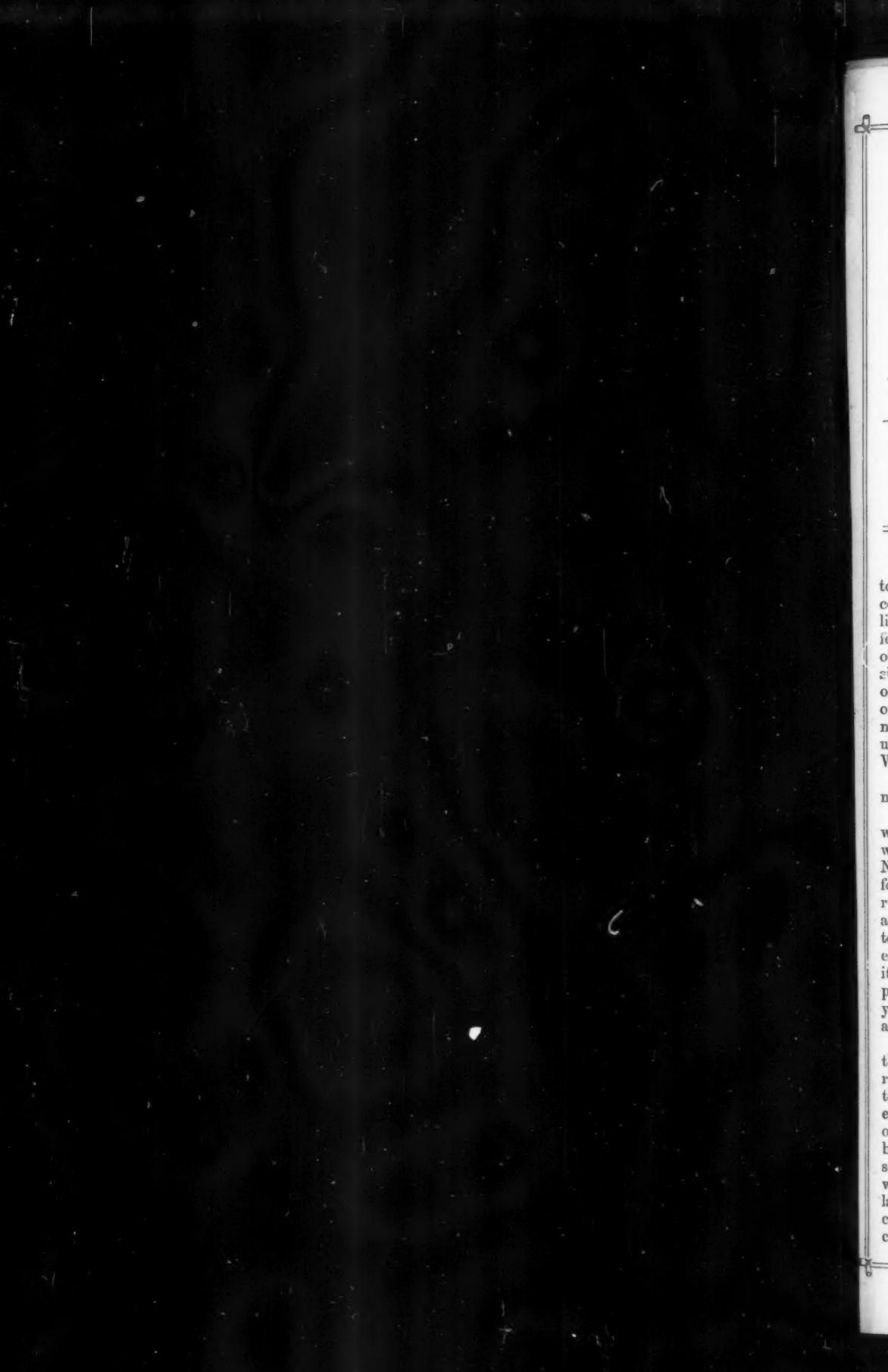


YORK, 1866.



SOCY. OF ARTS, PARIS.





DOOM'S DAY CAMP.

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF **ALL THE YEAR ROUND.**

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF TWO ORDINARY NUMBERS.

CHRISTMAS, 1872.

PRICE
4d.

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DOOM'S DAY CAMP.

"WAL, sir, and so you have concluded to fix yourself in our city! I guess you couldn't do better! This is the place for a live man, this Chicago, just beginning to feel its feet, not half played out like your old Manchester and Yorkshire on the other side. No, sir, and not like St. Louis, a one-horse place, which we could put into one of our grain elevators, but which is never tired of blowin' and crackin' itself up. Yes, sir, Chicago is the Queen of the West, you bet."

"Then you think I have done right in making up my mind to settle here?"

"Yes, sir, that is so! I am acquainted with this continent. I was down to Boston when I was a lad, and was located in New York at the Grand Central Hotel for two weeks when James T. Heffernan run for mayor. Likewise Philadelphia and Washington, but they don't amount to much. Don't you believe what the real estate brokers tell you about them cities; it won't wash, it's quite too thin; but plank down your pile in Chicago, and you'll have no need to move stakes never agen."

The speaker was a man standing two or three inches over six feet in height, lean-ribbed and wiry in frame, and giving one the idea of great strength. His clear grey eyes, looking even lighter than nature had originally intended them to be, in the deep bronzed complexion in which they were set, had a frank, earnest, and withal somewhat humorous expression; his nose was large and aquiline; his lips thin and compressed; and his square chin was covered with a long hay-coloured beard.

A slight stain at the corner of his mouth, an occasional abstraction of manner under the influence of extra enjoyment, and an unremitting attention to the china jar which, placed on the floor of the car, served for a spittoon, showed that Rufus P. Croffut followed the practice still common among his western countrymen, and regularly invested a certain portion of his dollar in Bagley's Mayflower, which he held to be the best chewing tobacco made in the States. His companion was a good specimen of the average middle-class Englishman, young, good-looking, and intelligent, and the place where the conversation just recorded was carried on was a drawing-room car—a large saloon on wheels, elegantly fitted with easy-chairs, tables, mirrors, &c., running over the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, and now nearing Chicago, the time being about eleven on the night of Sunday, the 8th of October, 1871.

"Blows, don't it?" said Rufus P. Croffut, pulling his coat tightly round him; "wind seems to snake in at every crack, and that nigger"—looking at the negro who was trimming one of the suspended lamps—"that nigger is powerful weak at keeping the door shut. Say, Peter, pretty tall wind outside, ain't there?"

"Reg'lar storm, colonel," replied the negro; "'nuff to blow de smokestack out of de locomotive."

"Fall weather is all gone, I guess, and we're going in for winter right away. Well, Mr. Middleton, since you're decided to squat in Chicago, I can recommend you to a boarding-house where you will be comfortably located."

"I'm not such a stranger in Chicago as you seem to think," said Harry Middleton, with a laugh. "I've been there once before, though only for a few days, and I have some friends there, one friend especially, who—in point of fact," he added, with cheeks flushing under his companion's searching gaze, "I am going to Chicago to be married."

"Why, thunder!" cried Croffut, with a broad grin. "Why, then, in course you won't want no boarding, but will go right away to housekeep! Say, mister, who is this gal of yours?"

Middleton started at the abruptness of the question, but immediately recollecting that his companion had no intention to offend, said, "She is Miss Otis, daughter of Judge Otis, and—"

"What Myra?" interrupted the Western. "Guess I've known her since she was born! Guess I know'd the jedge when he was sent to lobby a new appropriation for our post-office through Congress. She's the right sort is Myra. You're in luck's way, mister, and I give you joy! Ha, what's that!"

His exclamation was caused by a tremendous gust of wind, which came sweeping over the open plain, and seemed to shake the train of cars as it passed along.

"Dat's do wind dat I told you of," said the negro, pausing by them, and looking out of the window. "Bress my soul, it's a reg'lar wild night."

"That's suthin more than wind, Peter," said Croffut, following his look. "Keep your eyes skinned and see straight over there. I've done too much camping out not to know the streak of fire, and by G— it's there."

He pointed as he spoke to a light on the horizon, now dull red, now flaring bright at each successive gust of wind.

"Dey're got another fire in Chicago, I guess," said the negro, grinning and showing all his white teeth; "dey had one last night, so Adams's express-man in Pittsburgh was telling me just now. Burns bright, don't it, Mr. Croffut?" he added, shading his eyes with his hand; "dey do everything in Chicago better than anywhere else—even to fires."

"Tell you what it is," said Croffut, still looking straight before him, "this ain't going to be just one of your match-box blazes, this ain't. It means going, this does, and everything is in its favour. There has been no rain all summer, and the sun has scorched all the sap out of the trees, and baked the earth and the houses till they're

as dry as tinder, and as ready to fire. And there's this here drivin' gale of wind, surging up from the south-west. Look at the lake under it. It's whipping the waters until Old Nick is growin' reg'lar mad."

He pointed as he spoke to the lake, alongside of which the train was running, and on whose troubled surface the waves were rising high and white-crested, like the breakers on an ocean beach.

"Guess de fire department will be pretty tired with last night's work, and won't care about turning out again in a hurry," said Peter. "Flames seem to walk along strong, don't they, Mr. Croffut?"

"They du, that same," said Croffut; "the way it flares is a caution!"

"Have you any idea," asked Harry Middleton, who, while eagerly scanning the distant horizon, had listened to this conversation with blanched cheeks, "have you any idea whereabouts the fire is?"

"Looks somewhar round by the de-pot, I should say," said Peter, straining his eyes under the shade of his hand. "Don't you think so, Mr. Croffut?"

"More than that, I guess," said Croffut. "It would take all ten or twelve blocks to make that light. It's making tracks through them wooden buildings and shanties in the West Division, that's what's the matter. What makes you take such an interest in it, young man?" he asked, turning to Middleton.

"I—I was anxious for Myra."

"Lord, I forgot about the gal," said Croffut. "What is she stayin'?"

"At the Sherman House, or at the Pacific—I don't know which," said Harry.

"Don't you be skeared, my lad. I guess the jedge ain't easily taken by a deadfall. You can't come any gum-games over him; and if he saw the fire creeping up to his diggings, and thought he was going to be crowded out, he'd move stakes at once. He ain't one to bark up the wrong tree, ain't the jedge?"

As he spoke the engine, uttering its deep intermittent groans, and with the huge bell suspended midway over its boiler loudly clangin', was already running through the outskirts of the town, and nearing the scene of devastation. Already the narrow streets and alleys, right through the centre of which the railroad ran, were beginning to overflow, and to be choked with people driven from their houses, whose terror-stricken faces were silent witnesses of the anguish through which they had passed; women, frantic with terror, and only half dressed, who had

been roused from their threatened homes, and dragged into the streets; children, only half awake, and dazed and deafened by the roar and tumult; men, laden with such hasty waifs and strays of their deserted hearths as they had been enabled to snatch up in the moment of flight—all drifting about, in hopeless uncertainty, in search of any place of refuge. Already the train was forcing its way through an atmosphere alive with showers of sparks and swirling flakes of fire, which went hurtling through the air, borne upon the wings of the tornado then raging: an atmosphere so rarefied by the intense heat as to cause the cooler air from beyond to rush in with eddying whirlwinds. Already the engine, with its iron-tongued bell booming out the knell of doom, was coming to a standstill far in advance of its usual halting-place, and the affrighted passengers, leaping forth, saw before them a deep, dull, red glow fringed by two lively tongues of brilliant flame, which leaped forth, and lit up and swallowed all with which they came in contact.

Harry Middleton was one of the first to alight, and hurried on for a few steps, but he soon found anything like swift progress impossible, and stood, more than half dazed, gazing on the scene around him. Far into the broad channel of the main road, fed on either side by innumerable intersecting streets and courts and alleys, each contributing its quota of terror-stricken people to the general mass, came pouring a shrieking, yelling, gesticulating crowd, only to be numbered by thousands, and making its way it scarcely knew whither, in a mad frenzied stampede. Away from the fire they were rushing—away from the burnt-up beggars' homes and the scenes of horror which they had just witnessed; men, women, and children, all for the most part laden with some articles of value, which they had hastily secured, each trying to outstrip the other in the frantic flight. Crushing down into the midst of this mass were vehicles of every description, which had been hired at fabulous prices, and which were stacked with furniture and goods, amongst which not unfrequently lay crying women and cowering children, the drivers yelling at their frightened beasts, and fighting their way through the human mass, which was too weak to repulse them, and yet too dense and sorried to escape. But this escaping crowd, numerous and powerful as it was, did not have it all its own way. For directly opposed to it,

and hurrying from the very direction towards which it bent its steps, came another seething, struggling mass of humanity, composed of merchants and proprietors who, living far out in the extreme suburbs, had only just learned the disaster of the night, and were now hurrying into the city in hot haste eager to learn what amount of ruin had fallen upon them. Where these opposing bodies met, the scene was most frightful; men seized upon each other and endeavoured to clear the way and pursue their progress by sheer brute force; the old and feeble were knocked down and trampled upon; children were torn from their parents, and the heavy lurid air, echoing from time to time with a dull roar as the gunpowder did its useless work, was pierced with childish shrieks and female lamentations.

"Say," said a voice in Harry Middleton's ear, as he stood gazing at these frightful sights, "I've seen more fires than you could shake a stick at, but nothing like this; this livens up, this does, out of pure cussedness. Now, see here, I'm my own boss, and haven't got woman nor child to look after. You're too young to count for much in a skear like this, and I'll stand by your side and see you through it. Now come along with me, we'll make our track to the Sherman House and see after Myra and the judge."

It was Croffut's deep-toned voice that spoke; it was Croffut's hand that gripped Harry Middleton's arm, and pulled him forward. The young man made no attempt to resist, but pulled himself together with an effort, and followed his conductor down a broad street branching off from the main thoroughfare. Here the crowd was much less dense, though, even as it was, the street was terribly thronged, while the scenes enacted in it were of an equally painful and extraordinary character. For while, at the outbreak of the fire, the professional thieves had taken advantage of the public excitement to carry on a certain amount of petty pilfering, as the night wore on and the terrific extent of the impending disaster became apparent, they dropped all pretence of concealment, and aided by thousands of poverty-stricken loafers, who only needed the opportunity to drop from idleness into crime, began to pillage indiscriminately. Such stores and warehouses as were closed were speedily broken open and gutted of their contents, while in others, where the owners and their servants were busying themselves in packing up the property ready for transportation, the influx of a

band of desperadoes would be the signal for a hand-to-hand fight, at the conclusion of which, the legitimate occupants, outnumbered and overpowered, would be cast maimed and bleeding into the streets, while the robbers would give themselves up to their work of plunder and destruction.

It was obvious, however, from the nature of the booty which, in many cases, became theirs, that all their boldness and success would have been thrown away had they been unable to obtain the means of transport. In league with the robbers, however, were a large number of rascally "express-men" (who are the recognised agents for the conveyance of goods and luggage in America), corresponding to the Pickfords and other great railway-carriers in England, who, in consideration of a share of the proceeds, placed their wagons and horses at the disposal of the thieves, and waited as composedly at the doors of houses which were being ransacked, as though they were there upon a legitimate errand. Nor was the robbery confined to the sacking of shops and private dwellings. Raids had been made on the liquor stores, and the effects of the drink were beginning to be painfully prominent. While mandarin wretches, male and female, lay stretched upon the streets hiccuping forth their drunken songs and ribald blasphemy, others, who had not drunk so deeply, stood at the corners of the streets banded together in groups of three or four, and stopping all the women and children, and the weaker men that passed by, bearing money, jewellery, or any small article of value, compelled them to yield it up.

Not unprepared, apparently, for scenes of this kind, and certainly totally undaunted by them, was Rufus P. Croffut. Scarcely had they started on their walk when he stopped short, and putting his hands behind him and pulling a Derringer from each of those two hind-pockets which are so universal in American, so uncommon in European trousers, handed one to his companion, as he said :

"I reckon I git the drift of this pretty cl'ar. They're keerless of human life about here, these durned rowdies, and will draw a bead on you at onct if you hevn't the savvey to draw on them first. But there's a few of them know me, and I guess they'll dry up when they see me, so keep your shoot-ing-iron handy, and come along."

Whether it was that Croffut was known to these desperadoes as the hero of certain adventures in the early days in which very

rough though even-handed justice had been dealt forth, or whether, as is far more probable, his gaunt wiry frame, and resolute face, aided by the appearance of the Derringer in his right hand, had that effect, it is certain that he and his young companion pushed through the crowd unmolested, and made their way to the Sherman House.

On their arrival there found the mansion in a blaze!

Nevertheless it was the only place where a certain amount of discipline seemed to be preserved. The people who were gathered together in front of the burning pile were gazing idly on because they had nothing better to do; having been utterly ruined some hours previously, they could with equanimity contemplate the sufferings of their neighbours, but the residents in the hotel, having had due notice, had all long since been removed to places of shelter.

All?

"All, sir," said the clear-headed, energetic hotel clerk, who since the establishment was first threatened had been actively engaged in providing for the safety of those confided to his care, and to whom the question was addressed by Croffut; "all, sir, including a number of ladies as hadn't any male escort, and down to five ladies who were sick, and whom we just carried out of their rooms, and have placed in these hacks," pointing to some cabs just by the pavement and just about to start off.

"Five! There's only four women there," said Croffut; "but they look sick enough for fifty."

"There are five, sir," repeated the clerk, passing along, and looking into the cabs. "Why, my God!" he exclaimed, turning rapidly round to two or three of the porters who, scorched and blackened by the smoke, were standing by, silently watching the progress of the flames and momentarily expecting the building to fall in, "didn't any one go for the lady in Number Thirty-two, Judge Otis's room?"

"What's that?" cried Harry Middleton, pushing past his friend; "what name did you say?"

"Nonsense, stay; no matter, now," said Croffut, laying his heavy hand on the young man's chest, "the whole place is full of flames."

"Let me go," cried Harry, shaking him off, and seizing an axe from a fireman. "It's Myra's life that's in danger."

"Wal," said the hotel clerk, quietly, picking up a large overcoat that lay on the ground, and enveloping his head and arms

in it, "if you go, I'm going too, jest to show you the way."

"So am I," said Croffut, taking similar precautions. "If the poor girl is there, you'll want some one pretty strong to help her."

So, with a loud cry from the crowd, which was half a shout of encouragement, half an expression of horror at their boldness, the three men dashed forward into the now trembling structure. Through great flaring bursts of flame, that leapt and glowed all round them, through thick columns of smoke, they made their way, now halting for an instant before the hot breath of the fire, now pressing on with renewed energy, until the hotel clerk touched Croffut, who was leading, on the shoulder, and silently pointed to a door. At a blow and a kick from the western man's foot and hand, in it crashed, leaving an aperture through which Harry Middleton was the first to spring.

It was her room! Harry recognised the heavy blue serge dress hanging in the open wardrobe as one which he had himself ordered from England, for Myra—but the room was empty—she was not there! He ran hither and thither shrieking her name in tones of anguish, then overpowered by the smoke and flame, but worst of all by the deadly sinking of his heart, he succumbed and fell senseless on the floor.

When Harry Middleton came to himself, the first thing he felt was an acute pain in his right arm, and looking at it he found that the sleeve of his coat had been cut away, and that the limb was enveloped in strips of wetted rag. Where was he? How came he to be lying there stretched out on his back, propped up against a mound of turf, and, as far as he could make out through the gloom, with trees not yet entirely stripped of their autumnal foliage waving above him? What was this strong smell of charred wood? What was the meaning of that red lurid light in the sky above and all around? Ah, he remembered now, the burning city, the crumbling walls of the hotel, the—the search for his lost love! And this beneath him on which he was lying, this substance half singed, half soaked, was her serge dress, the last thing on which he had looked before his senses left him! What had happened to him that he had abandoned the search and lay idle there? He must get up at once and learn what had occurred! He strove to raise himself, but there was a dead numbness through all his

limbs and he fell back helpless. At that moment Rufus P. Croffut's honest face was interposed between him and the sky.

"Say," cried the kindly western giant, "why you ain't crazy no longer, but have come right away to yerself! Lay right still and listen while I talk to yer! I know what ye're going to ask—about Miss Myra, ain't it? She's safe, you bet!"

"Safe!" cried Harry, with a groan.

"Wal, she wasn't folded up in the fire at the Sherman House, anyhow. This is all about that. When you caved in on the floor, I thought you was clean rubbed out. Me and the hotel clerk, who is cl'ar grit all through—me and the hotel clerk throwed a pitcher of water over this here gownd, and fixed you up in it, and snaked you out as best we could. It wern't such cruel easy work, but we got through with it, and while I was wondering whether you'd passed in your checks or was still good for a hand, one of the hackmen came up and told me he see'd Jedge Otis and his gal pass out of the hotel more than an hour before. I told him he lied, but he fixed it up right enough, for he says, 'I'm from New Hampshire, and I've know'd the jedge ever since he was a long-legged galoot at East Concord—the gal she's sick, ain't she? Wal, the jedge he comes out, and he makes a trade with James M'Nulty, one of the hackmen, to take him and a lady out of the reach of the fire: anywhere, he says, out of the reach. Sixty dollars M'Nulty asked, and the jedge never dickered, but agreed to give it, and went back into the house to fetch the lady. While he was gone, Natey Dodge, of the jewellery store in the next block, came round saying he'd been trying everywhere for an express waggon and couldn't get one, and he give the hackman a five hundred dollar bill to let him pack the coach full of his goods as many times as he could between then and the time the fire got to his store. 'That's good enough for me,' said the driver, and though the jedge just then arrove at the door with the sick gal in his arms, the hackman was driving off, when three men in the crowd standing by had a word together. Then two of them went for the driver, knocked him into the road and held him there, while the third helped to hand the jedge and the lady into the carriage, jumped on to the box, seized the reins, and struck a bee-line for a place of safety.'"

"Thank God," said Harry Middleton, faintly. "But has nothing more been heard of her?"

"Wal, no," said Croffut, after a short pause. "It ain't no use lying, and so far

I am cornered. I brought you out here, mostwise on my back, to this here Lincoln Park, where all the poor skeared homeless critturs has fled to, and where, if you could only look round—so, gently, let me give you a heft under the shoulder, now, down again—you would see yourself s'rounded by the curiousist lot of humans, Germans, French, and all sorts. Doom's Day Camp some of 'em calls it, and I ain't surprised that many of 'em think the very last day's come for 'em, poor wretches. I spoke to two or three of them, for though they had misery enough of their own I know'd they'd look after you, and they did so, while I went and looked all round the park. Sech heaps of trouble I never see; men, women, and children all down in it, but the jedge weren't among them, nor Myra neither."

"What shall I do, oh what shall I do?"

"Don't go back on your luck, sonny," said Croffut, cheerily; "nothing can't be done till daybreak, and there's hours till then, when I'll set about a further search. See, here's two of your nurses coming to speak to yer," he added, as a man and a woman drew near.

"Gott sey dank, the young herr is better," said the woman, a fresh, wholesome-looking German, with rather sad grey eyes, hurrying to Harry's side.

And before Harry could thank her several of the other sufferers came up, haggard, and worn, and smoke-blackened, but all, even in their own misery, sufficiently human-hearted to find a kind word for the suffering lad, of the loss of whose love, and of whose bravery in the search for her, they had heard.

They grouped themselves around, and after discussing for the thousandth time the incidents of the fire, as personally affecting themselves, drifted into indifferent topics. At last one of the men lying on the outside edge of the circle struck a key-note by saying :

"This here park jines on to the cemetery, I guess. I hope no catawampus vampires will be out grazing thereto-night."

"Ach Himmel, don't talk of such dreadful things as vampires," cried a fair-haired German girl, burying her head in her mother's lap.

"And yet they are not so dreadful as those who think they have to deal with them," said a grave French gentleman from his place close by Harry. "I know a story—"

"A story!" cried Croffut, "Hyer, hand it round."

Instantly there was a chorus of exclama-

tions in various languages, all clamouring for the story.

"Well," said the French gentleman, relaxing into a grave smile, "I will tell you the story. It may serve to send some to sleep, or for a time to distract the thoughts of others from matters of which, Heaven knows, they will have enough."

And so, without further preface, he commenced—

THE FATE OF MADAME CABANEL.

PROGRESS had not invaded, science had not enlightened, the little hamlet of Picuvert, in Brittany. They were a simple, ignorant, superstitious set who lived there, and the luxuries of civilisation were known to them as little as its learning. They toiled hard all the week; they went regularly to mass in the little chapel; believed implicitly all that monsieur le curé said to them, and many things he did not say; and they took all the unknown, not as magnificent, but as diabolical.

The sole link between them and the outside world was Monsieur Jules Cabanel, the proprietor par excellence of the place; maire, juge de paix, and all the public functionaries rolled into one. And he sometimes went to Paris, whence he returned with a cargo of novelties that excited envy, admiration, or fear, according to the degree of intelligence in those who beheld them. Monsieur Jules Cabanel was not the most charming man of his class in appearance, but he was generally held to be a good fellow at bottom. A short, thick-set, low-browed man, with blue-black hair cropped close like a mat, as was his blue-black beard, inclined to obesity and fond of good living, he had need have some virtues behind the bush to compensate for his want of personal charms. He was not bad, however; he was only common and unlovely.

Up to fifty years of age he had remained unmarried. Perhaps his handsome housekeeper, Adèle, had something to do with his persistent celibacy. They said she had, under their breath as it were, down in the village; but no one dared to so much as hint the like to herself. She was a proud, reserved kind of woman, and had strong notions of her own dignity, which no one cared to disturb. So, whatever the underhand gossip of the place might be, neither she nor her master got wind of it.

Presently, and quite suddenly, Jules Cabanel, who had been for a longer time than usual in Paris, came home with a

wife. Adèle had twenty-four hours' notice only to prepare, and the task seemed heavy. But she got through it; arranged the rooms as she knew her master would wish them to be arranged, and even placed a voluntary bunch of flowers on the salon table.

"Strange flowers for a bride," said to herself little Jeannette, the goose-girl who was sometimes brought into the house to work, as she noticed heliotrope—called in France "la fleur des veuves"—scarlet poppies, with a bunch of belladonna, and another of aconite—scarcely flowers of bridal welcome or bridal significance. Nevertheless, they stood where Adèle had placed them; and if Monsieur Cabanel meant anything by the passionate expression of disgust with which he ordered them out of his sight, madame seemed to understand nothing, as she smiled with the look of a person who is assisting at a scene of which the true bearing is not understood.

Madame Cabanel was an Englishwoman; young, pretty, and fair as an angel.

"La beauté du diable," said the Pieuvrotines, with something between a sneer and a shudder; for the words meant with them more than they mean in ordinary use. Swarthy, ill-nourished, low of stature, and meagre in frame as they were themselves, they could not understand the plump form, tall figure, and fresh complexion of the Englishwoman. Unlike their own experience, it was therefore more likely to be evil than good. The feeling which had sprung up against her at first sight deepened when it was observed that, although she went to mass with praiseworthy punctuality, she did not know her missal, and signed herself à travers. *La beauté du diable, in faith!*

"Pouf!" said Martin Briolic, the old grave-digger of the little cemetery; "with those red lips of hers, her rose cheeks, and her plump shoulders, she looks like a vampire, and as if she lived on blood."

He said this one evening down at La Veuve Prieur's, and he said it with an air of conviction that had its weight. For Martin Briolic was reputed the wisest man of the district, not even excepting monsieur le curé, who was wise in his own way which was not Martin's, nor Monsieur Cabanel, who was wise in his, which was neither Martin's nor the curé's. He knew all about the weather and the stars, the wild herbs that grew on the plains and the wild shy beasts that eat them, he had the power of divination, and could find where the hidden springs of water lay far down in the earth. He knew, too, where

treasures could be had on Christmas Eve if only you were quick and brave enough to enter the cleft in the rock at the right moment, and come out again before too late; and he had seen with his own eyes the White Ladies dancing in the moonlight, and the little imps, the lutins, playing by the pit at the edge of the wood. And he had a shrewd suspicion as to who, among those black-hearted men of La Crèche-en-bois, the rival hamlet, was a loup-garou if ever there was one on the face of the earth—and no one doubted that! He had other powers of a yet more mystic kind; so that Martin Briolic's bad word went for something.

Fanny Campbell, or, as she was now, Madame Cabanel, would have excited no special attention anywhere but at such a dead-alive, ignorant, and gossiping place as Pieuvrot. What history she had was commonplace enough. She was simply an orphan and a governess; very young, and very poor; whose employers had quarrelled with her, and left her stranded in Paris, alone and almost moneyless, and who had married Monsieur Jules Cabanel as the best thing she could do. Loving no one else, she was not difficult to be won by the first man who showed her kindness in her trouble and destitution; and she accepted her middle-aged suitor, who was fitter to be her father than her husband, with a determination to do her duty cheerfully and faithfully. She did not know, however, of the handsome housekeeper, Adèle, nor of the housekeeper's little nephew, to whom her master was so kind that he allowed him to live at the Maison Cabanel, and had him well taught by the curé. Perhaps if she had she would have thought twice before she put herself under the same roof with a woman who for a bridal bouquet offered her poppies, heliotrope, and poison-flowers.

If one had to name the predominant characteristic of Madame Cabanel, it would be easiness of temper. You saw it in the round, soft lines of her face and figure, in her mild blue eyes, and placid, unvarying smile; which, however, sometimes irritated the more petulant French temperament, and especially disgusted Adèle. It seemed almost impossible to make madame angry, or even to make her understand when she was insulted, the housekeeper used to say with disdain. But madame accepted all Adèle's haughty reticence and defiant continuance of mistresshood with unwearied sweetness; indeed she expressed herself gratified that so

much trouble was taken off her hands, and that Adèle so kindly took her duties on herself.

The consequence of this placid lazy life, where all her faculties were, in a manner, asleep, and where she was enjoying the reaction from her late years of privation and anxiety, was, as might be expected, an increase in physical beauty that made her freshness and good condition still more remarkable. Her lips were redder, her cheeks rosier, her shoulders plumper than ever; but as she waxed, the health of the little hamlet waned; and not the oldest inhabitant remembered so sickly a season, or so many deaths. The master, too, suffered slightly, and the little Adolphe desperately.

This failure of general health in undrained hamlets is not uncommon in France or in England; but Adèle treated it as something out of the line of normal experience; and, breaking through her habits of reticence, spoke to every one quite fiercely of the strange sickness that had fallen on Pieuvrot and the Maison Cabanel; and how she believed it was something more than common; while as to her little nephew, she could neither give a name nor find a remedy for the mysterious disease that had attacked him. There were strange things among them, she used to say; and Pieuvrot had never done well since the old times were changed. Jeannette used to notice how she would sit gazing at the English lady, with such a deadly look on her handsome face, when she turned from her fresh complexion and grand physique to the pale face of the stunted, meagre, fading child. It was a look, she said afterwards, that used to make her flesh get like ice and creep like worms.

One night Adèle, as if she could bear it no longer, dashed down to where old Martin Briolic lived, to ask him to tell her of his knowledge how it all had come about—and the remedy.

"Hold, Ma'amé Adèle," said Martin, as he shuffled his greasy cards, and laid them out in triplets on the table; "there is more in this than one sees. One sees only a poor little child become suddenly sick; that may be, is it not so? and no harm done by man? Heaven sends sickness to us all. But the little Adolphe has not been touched by the Bon Dieu. I see the will of a wicked woman in this. Hein!" Here he shuffled the cards, and laid them out with a kind of eager distraction of manner, his withered hands trembling, and his mouth muttering words Adèle could not catch. "Saint Joseph and all the saints

protect us!" he cried, "the foreigner—the Englishwoman! Ah, misery!"

"Speak, Father Martin! What do you mean!" cried Adèle, grasping his arm. Her black eyes were wild, her arched nostrils dilated, her lips, thin, sinuous, flexible, were pressed tight over her small square teeth. "Tell me in plain words what you would say!"

"Broucolaque! Vampire!" said Martin, in a low voice.

"It is what I believed!" cried Adèle. "It is what I knew. Ah, my Adolphe! woe on the day when the master brought that fair-skinned devil home!"

"Those red lips don't come by nothing, Ma'amé Adèle," said Martin, nodding his head. "Look at them—they glisten with blood! I said so from the beginning; and the cards, they said so too. I drew 'blood' and a 'bad fair woman' on the evening the master brought her home, and I said to myself, 'Ha, ha, Martin! you are on the track, my boy;' and, Ma'amé Adèle, I have never left it! Broucolaque! that's what the cards say, Ma'amé Adèle. Watch and see; watch and see; and you'll find that the cards have spoken true."

"And when we have found, Martin?" said Adèle, in a hoarse whisper.

The old man shuffled his cards again. "When we have found, Ma'amé Adèle?" he said slowly. "You know the old pit out there by the forest? the old pit where the lutins run in and out, and where the White Ladies wring the necks of those who come upon them in the moonlight? Perhaps the White Ladies will do as much for the English wife of Monsieur Cabanel; who knows?"

"They may," said Adèle, gloomily.

"Courage, brave woman; they shall," said Martin.

The only really pretty place about Pieuvrot was the cemetery. To be sure there was the dark gloomy forest, which was grand in its own mysterious way; and there was the broad wide plain, where you might wander for a long summer's day; but these were scarcely places where a young woman would care to go by herself; and for the rest, the little patches of cultivated ground, which the peasants had snatched from the surrounding waste and where they raised their poor crops, were not very lovely. So Madame Cabanel, who, for all the soft indolence that had invaded her, had the Englishwoman's love for walking and fresh air, haunted the pretty little graveyard a good deal. She had no sentiment connected with it. Of all

the dead who laid there in their narrow coffins, she knew none and cared for none; but she liked to see the flower-beds, and the wreaths of immortelles, and the like. The distance, too, from her own home was just enough for her; and the view over the plain to the dark belt of forest and the mountains beyond was fine.

The Pieuvroutines, however, did not understand this. It was inexplicable to them that any one, not out of her mind, should go continually to the cemetery; not on the day of the dead, and not to adorn the grave of one she loved; only to sit there and wander among the tombs, looking out on to the plain and the mountains beyond when she was tired.

"It was just like—" The speaker, one Lesouëf, had got as far as this, when he stopped for a word.

It was down at La Veuve Prieur's, where the hamlet collected nightly to discuss the day's small doings, and where the main theme, ever since she had come among them, had been Madame Cabanel.

"Wander about among the tombs just like what, Jean Lesouëf?" said Martin Briolic. Then rising, he added, in a low but distinct voice, every word falling clear and clean, "I will tell you like what, Lesouëf—like a vampire! La Femme Cabanel has red lips and red cheeks, and Ma'amé Adèle's little nephew is perishing before your eyes. La Femme Cabanel has red lips and red cheeks, and she sits for hours among the tombs. Can you read the riddle, my friends? For me it is as clear as the blessed sun."

"Ha, Father Martin, you have found the word—like a vampire!" said Lesouëf with a shudder.

"Like a vampire!" they all echoed with a groan.

"And I said vampire from the first," said Martin Briolic. "Call it to mind; I said it from the first."

"Faith, and you did," they answered; "and you said true."

So now the seed which Martin and Adèle had dropped so sedulously had at last taken root; and the Pieuvroutines would have been ready to accuse of atheism and immorality any one who had doubted their decision, and had declared that pretty Madame Cabanel was no vampire at all, but only a young woman with nothing special to do, a naturally fair complexion, and superb health.

The little Adolphe grew paler and paler, thinner and thinner; the fierce summer sun told on the half-starved dwellers within those

foul mud huts surrounded by undrained marshes; and Monsieur Jules Cabanel's former solid health followed the law of the rest. The doctor, who lived at Crèche-en-bois, shook his head at the look of things, and said it was grave. When Adèle pressed him to tell her what was the matter with the child and with monsieur, he evaded the question, or gave her a word she neither understood nor could pronounce. The truth was, he was a credulous and intensely suspicious man; a man, too, who made theories and then gave himself to the task of finding them true. He had made the theory that Fanny was secretly poisoning both her husband and the child; and though he would not give Adèle a hint of this, he would not set her mind at rest by a definite answer that went on any other line.

As for Monsieur Cabanel, he was a man without imagination and without suspicion; a man to take life easily, and not distress himself too much for the fear of wounding others; a selfish man, but not a cruel one; a man whose own pleasure was his supreme law, and who could not imagine, still less brook, opposition, or the want of love and respect for himself. Still, he loved his wife as he had never loved woman before. Coarsely-moulded, common-natured as he was, he loved her with what strength and passion of poetry nature had given him. But the quality of his love was sorely tried when, now Adèle, now the doctor, hinted mysteriously, the one at diabolical influences, the other at underhand proceedings of which it behoved him to be careful—especially careful what he eat and drank and how it was prepared, and by whom; Adèle adding hints about the perfidiousness of Englishwomen, and the share the devil had in fair hair and brilliant complexions. Love his young wife as he might, this constant dropping of poison was not without some effect.

One evening, when Adèle, in an agony, was kneeling at his feet—madame had gone out for her usual walk—crying, "Why did you leave me for such as she is?—I, who loved you, who was faithful to you, and she, who walks among the graves, who sucks your blood and our child's—she who has only the devil's beauty for her portion, and who loves you not?"—something seemed suddenly to touch him with electric force.

"Miserable fool that I was!" he said, resting his head on Adèle's shoulder, weeping. Her heart leapt with joy. Was her reign to be renewed? Was her rival

to be dispossessed? And might she dare—?

From that evening Monsieur Cabanel's manner changed to his young wife, but she was too easy-tempered and unsuspicious to notice anything; or if she did, there was too little depth in her own love for him—it was so much a matter of untroubled friendliness only—that she did not fret, but accepted the coldness and brusqueness that had crept into his manner as good-naturedly as she accepted all things. It would have been wiser if she had cried, and made a scene, and come to an understanding with Monsieur Cabanel. They would have understood each other better; and most Frenchmen like the excitement of a quarrel and a reconciliation.

Naturally kind-hearted, Madame Cabanel went much about the village, offering help to the sick. But no one among them all received her civilly, or accepted her aid. If she attempted to touch one of the children, the mother, shuddering, withdrew it hastily to her own arms; if she spoke to the adult sick, the wan eyes would look at her with a strange horror, and the feeble voice would mutter words in a patois she could not understand. But always came the same word, "Broucolaque!"

It was the same at home. If she wanted to do any little act of kindness to the child, Adèle passionately refused her. Once she snatched him rudely from her arms, saying as she did so, "Infamous broucolaque! before my very eyes?" And once when Fanny was troubled about her husband, and proposed to make him a cup of beef-tea à l'Anglaise, the doctor looked at her as if he would have looked her through, and Adèle upset the saucepan, saying insolently—but yet hot tears were in her eyes—"Is it not fast enough for you, madame? Not faster, unless you kill me first!"

To all of which Fanny replied nothing; thinking only that the doctor was very rude to stare so fixedly at her, and that Adèle was horribly cross; and what an ill-tempered creature she was, and how unlike an English housekeeper.

But Monsieur Cabanel, when he was told of the little scene, called Fanny to him, and said in a more caressing voice than he had used to her of late: "Thou wouldst not hurt me, little wife? It was love and kindness, not wrong, that thou wouldst do?"

"Wrong? What wrong could I do?" answered Fanny, opening her blue eyes wide. "What but love should I give to my best and only friend?"

"And I am thy friend then, to thy mind?

"Thou lovest me, dear?" said Monsieur Cabanel.

"Dear Jules, who is so dear? who so near?" she said, kissing him; while he said fervently:

"God bless thee!"

The next day Monsieur Cabanel, who was a little better, was called away on urgent business; he might be absent for two days, he said, but he would try to lessen the time; and the young wife was left alone in the midst of her enemies, without even such slight guard as his presence might prove.

Adèle was out. It was a dark, hot summer's night, and the little Adolphe had been more feverish and restless than usual all the day. Towards evening he grew worse; and though Jeannette had strict commands not to allow madame to touch him, she grew frightened at the condition of the boy; and when madame came into the small parlour which Adèle called her own, to offer her assistance, Jeannette gladly abandoned a charge that was too heavy for her, and let the lady take him from her arms.

Sitting there with the child in her lap, cooing to him a low, soft, nursery song in English, the paroxysm of his pain seemed to her to pass; and it was as if he slept. But in that paroxysm he had bitten both his lip and tongue, and the blood was now oozing from his mouth. He was a pretty boy, and his mortal sickness made him at this moment pathetically lovely. Fanny bent her head and kissed the pale still face, and the blood that was on his lips was transferred to hers.

While she still bent over him, her woman's heart touched with a mysterious force and prevision of motherhood, Adèle, followed by old Martin and some others of the village, rushed into the room.

"Behold her!" she cried, seizing Fanny by her arm, and forcing her face upward by the chin—"behold her in the act! Friends, look at my child—dead, dead in her arms, and she with his blood on her lips! Do you want more proofs? Vampire that she is, can you deny the evidence of your own senses?"

"No! no!" roared the crowd, hoarsely, "she is a vampire—a creature cursed by God, and the enemy of man; away with her to the pit! She must die as she has made others to die!"

"What is the meaning of all this?" said Madame Cabanel, rising and facing the crowd with the true courage of an Englishwoman. "What harm have I done

to any of you that you should come about me, in the absence of my husband, with these angry looks and insolent words?"

"What harm hast thou done!" cried old Martin. "Sorceress as thou art, thou hast bewitched our good master, and, vampire as thou art, thou nourishest thyself on our blood. Have we not proof of that at this very moment? Look at thy mouth—cursed broucolaque; and here lies thy victim, who accuses thee in his death!"

Fanny laughed scornfully. "I cannot condescend to answer such folly," she said, lifting her head. "Are you men or children?"

"We are men, madame," said Legros, the miller; "and being men we must protect our weak ones. We have all had our doubts—and who more cause than I, with three little ones taken to heaven before their time?—and now we are convinced."

"Because I have nursed a dying child, and done my best to soothe him!" said Madame Cabanel, with unconscious pathos.

"No more words!" cried Adèle, dragging her by the arm she had never let go. "To the pit with her, my friends, if you would not see all your children die as mine has died, as our good Legros's have died!"

A kind of shudder shook the crowd, and a groan that sounded in itself a curse burst from them.

"To the pit!" they cried. "Let the demons take their own!"

Quick as thought Adèle pinioned the strong white arms; and before the poor girl could utter more than one cry Legros had placed his brawny hand over her mouth. Though this destruction of a monster was not the murder of a human being in his mind, or in the mind of any there, still they did not care to have their nerves disturbed by cries that sounded so human as Madame Cabanel's. Silent, then, and gloomy, that dreadful cortége took its way to the forest, carrying its living load, gagged and helpless as if it had been a corpse, among them. Save with Adèle and old Martin, it was not so much personal animosity as the instinctive self-defence of fear that animated them. They were executioners, not enemies; and the executioners of a more righteous law than that allowed by the national code. But one by one they dropped off, till their numbers were reduced to six; of whom Legros was one, and Lesouëf, who had lost his only sister, another.

The pit was not more than an English mile from the Maison Cabanel. It was a dark and lonesome spot, where not the bravest man of all that assembly would

have dared to go alone after nightfall; but a multitude gives courage, said old Martin Briolic; and half a dozen stalwart men, led by such a woman as Adèle, were not afraid of even lutins or the White Ladies.

As swiftly as they could for the burden they bore, and all in utter silence, the cortége strode over the moor, one or two of them carrying rude torches; for the night was black, and the way was not without its natural dangers. Nearer and nearer they came to the fatal bourn, and heavier grew the weight of their victim. She had long ceased to struggle, and now lay as if dead in the hands of her bearers. But no one spoke of this or of aught else. Not a word was exchanged between them.

The way got darker, the distance between them and the place of execution shorter; and at last they reached the border of the pit where this fearful monster, this vampire—poor innocent Fanny Cabanel—was to be thrown. As they lowered her, the light of their torches fell on her face.

"Grand Dieu!" cried Legros, taking off his cap; "she is dead!"

"A vampire cannot die," said Adèle. "It is only an appearance. Ask Father Martin."

"A vampire cannot die unless the evil spirits take her, or she is buried with a stake thrust through her body," said Martin Briolic sententiously.

"I don't like the look of it," said Legros; and so said some others.

They had taken the bandage from the mouth of the poor girl, and as she lay in the flickering light, her blue eyes half-open, and her pale face white with the whiteness of death, a little return of human feeling among them shook them as if the wind had passed over them.

Suddenly they heard the sound of horses' hoofs thundering across the plain. They counted two, four, six; and they were now only four unarmed men, with Martin and Adèle to make up the number. Between the vengeance of man, and the power and malice of the wood-demons, their courage faded, and their presence of mind deserted them. Legros rushed frantically into the darkness of the forest, and Lesouëf followed him; the two others fled over the plain, while the horsemen came nearer and nearer. Only Adèle and Martin Briolic stood their ground; Adèle holding the torch high above her head, to show herself in her swarthy passion and revenge, and the dead body of her victim, more clearly. She wanted no concealment; she had done her

work, and she gloried in it. Then the horsemen came plunging to them; Jules Cabanel the first, followed by the doctor, and four gardes-champêtres.

"Wretches! murderers!" was all he said, as he flung himself from his horse, and raised the pale face to his lips.

"Master," said Adèle, "she deserved to die. She is a vampire, and she has killed our child."

"Fool!" cried Jules Cabanel, flinging off her hand. "Oh, my loved wife, thou who did no harm to man or beast, to be murdered now by men who are worse than beasts!"

"She was killing thee," said Adèle. "Ask monsieur le docteur. What ailed the master, monsieur?"

"Do not bring me into this infamy," said the doctor, looking up from the dead. "Whatever ailed monsieur, she ought not to be here! You have made yourself her judge and executioner, Adèle, and you must answer for it to the law."

"You say this too, master?" said Adèle.

"I say so too," returned Monsieur Cabanel. "To the law you must answer for the innocent life you have so cruelly taken—you and all the fools and murderers you have joined to you."

"And there is to be no vengeance for our child?"

"Would you revenge yourself on God, woman?" said Monsieur Cabanel, sternly.

"And our past years of love, master?"

"Are memories of hate, Adèle," said Monsieur Cabanel, as he turned again to the pale face of his dead wife.

"Then my place is vacant," said Adèle, with a bitter cry. "Ah, my little Adolphe, it is well thou went before!"

"Hold, Ma'am Adèle!" cried Martin.

But before a hand could be stretched out, with one bound, one shriek, she had flung herself into the pit where she had hoped to bury Madame Cabanel; and they heard her body strike the water at the bottom with a dull splash, as of something falling from a great distance.

"They can prove nothing against me, Jean," said old Martin to the garde who held him. "I neither bandaged her mouth nor carried her on my shoulders. I am the grave-digger of Pieuvrot, and, ma foi, you would all do badly, you poor creatures, when you die, without me! I shall have the honour of digging madame's grave, never doubt it; and, Jean," he whispered, "they may talk as they like, those rich aristos, who know nothing; she is a vampire, and she shall have a stake through her

body yet. Who knows better than I? If we don't tie her down like this, she will come out of her grave and suck our blood."

"Silence there!" said the garde commanding the little escort. "To prison with the assassins, and keep their tongues from wagging."

"To prison with the martyrs and the public benefactors!" retorted old Martin. "So the world rewards its best."

And in this faith he lived and died as a forcat at Toulon; maintaining to the last that he had done the world good service by ridding it of a monster. But Legros, and also Lesouëf, his companions, doubted gravely of the righteousness of that act of theirs on that dark summer's night in the forest; and though they always maintained they should not have been punished because of their good motives, yet they grew in time to disbelieve old Martin Briolic and his wisdom, and to wish that they had let the law take its own course unhelped by them—reserving their strength for grinding the hamlet's flour and mending the hamlet's sabots, and leading a good life, according to the teaching of monsieur le curé and the exhortations of their wives.

As the French gentleman had proceeded with his story the listeners had increased in number, and now, when he ceased speaking, and looked around him with a little gesture to intimate that he had come to the end of Madame Cabanel's sad history, there was, as Mr. Rufus P. Croffut remarked, "quite a crowd."

"And what's more," said that gentleman, who seemed to take the foremost place in the company, as if it were a mere matter of course, "that's not only a derned good story of yours, mister, but it was a derned good idea of yours to start telling of it. Here we are, dead fixed in this all-fired Doom's Day Camp of ours, and can't do nothing till daybreak nohow, and as for sleep, I guess there ain't many of us ready for that to-night. S'pose somebody follers on, and tells us another story? I ain't good at literatoor and that myself, but I'm death on listening, and like a story just as a child likes candy; so do a lot more here, I dessay. As for talkers, why they ain't in general hard to find, and there must be plenty of good stories knockin' round here somewhere. What d'y'e say?"

The suggestion was received with every mark of favour, and it was unanimously resolved that an attempt should be made

to while away the tedium of the night in the manner suggested. But a little difficulty threatened to mar the project at the very outset. Nobody seemed inclined to begin. Everybody seemed to be in Mr. Croffut's case, and to be ready for any amount of listening, but for nothing else. There was an awkward pause, and a dead silence.

"What's the matter now?" said Mr. Croffut, with his deep laugh. "All afraid? Wal, I s'pose I shall have to act president of this meeting, and order somebody to make a start. What do you say, colonel?" he added to the man whom he had introduced to Harry as one of his nurses; "you look as if you'd travelled a bit, and seen a thing or two."

"That's true," said the man, a big, broad-shouldered Englishman; "that's true, though I don't think I'm as good at story-telling as I am at sheep-farming and that. However, if you like, I'll try my best, and tell you what happened to a neighbour of mine in Australia, when he chanced to meet a famous bushranging rascal they called—

JINGLING GEORDIE.

"I WONDER when John will be back? Oh, I wonder when?" thought Lizzie Armstrong, a pretty trim north-country lass, as she stood by the open window of the Australian farm-house, round which clustered a large-leaved creeper with great yellow flowers; "he is so bold and daring, that I know if the blacks or bushrangers tried to carry off any of father's sheep, John would fight for them, though there were a hundred against him. But there, how foolish I am, there's no danger about here."

Lizzie was busy ironing, and as she thought of her lover's danger she put down her iron on its stand, sat down with one hand on the pile of snowy-white linen, and thought over John's last words before he started for the sheep-run, thirty miles off. Not a syllable, not a tone of the voice had escaped her: for were not the words and music of them printed on her heart? "Lizzie, darling, I have served your father well and faithfully these seven years now, and when I return I mean to ask him for you. I think he likes me, and though he is a hard, stern man, and despises my education, and my 'high-faluting Oxford talk,' as he calls it, I do not think he will refuse, for he knows I love you dearly, and he knows you love me." There had been a kiss between several of these words, and

those kisses, too, Lizzie had not forgotten. Presently she rose, looked out at the great sun sinking fast in a fiery ocean of cloud, leant her cheek on her hand, and still thought of John.

All at once the face of a brown-bearded man pushed through the leaves, and its lips flew to hers. Yes, it was John himself! She gave a little startled scream, then the two lovers stood face to face at the window, and he held her hands. There were many inarticulate words expressive of joy and delight.

"Why, John, this is the very spot where we parted."

"Do you think I forget it, Lizzie?"

"Nine weeks ago; oh, such long weeks, John, they have been. But what has brought you back, dear, so soon? Nothing bad I hope."

The young bailiff's face fell.

"Yes, bad, Lizzie — very bad. Bob Wilson is losing sheep on his run every other day, and we can find no tracks of them. There are no black fellows near there, and a bushranger hasn't, as you know, been seen in this part of the colony for three years. We have had no floods. It baffles me, and I've come back, at Bob's request, to try and smooth matters for him, and to ask whether we shall not change our runs, and see if that betters it. One more kiss, Lizzie, then I'll go and put up my horse, and come in and lay the whole affair before your father."

The one kiss grew into several.

"I thought I heard talking in the parlour, Lizzie, as I came round; who is with your father?"

"Why it's that horrid Mr. Travers from Melbourne. He came yesterday after some wool."

Churton's face darkened. "He has come after you, Lizzie. I hate that fellow. Let him look out. Good-bye, dearest, I shall feed the horse and be in directly."

The moment after he left, a little bright-eyed girl of twelve ran in and caught hold of Lizzie's apron. It was Lizzie's younger sister, Kitty.

"Lizzie," said she, "father and Mr. Travers have been talking about you. Mr. Travers wants to marry you, and he says he's very rich, and they're drinking the champagne he brought like anything. Oh, he's such a beautiful singer, Lizzie, and he's brought you such a beautiful blue silk gown!"

"I don't want his gown," said Lizzie, ironing viciously, wishing it was over Mr. Travers's face.

"Lizzie, my lass," shouted a harsh, coarse, north-country voice, from the next room, "bring us in my silver tankard, and come and see the beautiful gown Mr. Travers has brought thee."

"If he dares to leave it I'll tear it to pieces," said Lizzie, her eyes kindling as she went to a cupboard and brought out the tankard, a prize long ago at an agricultural show at Carlisle. When she entered the parlour she found her father and the detestable sleek, vulgar, false-looking Mr. Travers, seated at a rough table, on which stood two empty champagne bottles. Both men looked flushed, and Mr. Travers had one leg thrown carelessly over the arm of the chair on which he sat. He at once unhooked himself, and rose with vulgar politeness to hand a third for Lizzie, an act of politeness which her father greeted with a saturnine smile.

"Only hear the news, Lizzie lass, Master Travers has brought. The Melbourne Argus says that Jingling Geordie, the famous bushranger, has threatened to cross over to our part because our police had said that we shouldn't put up so easy with his ways as the New South Wales police have done. Ah, he's a lish yen (supple one), but he'll no' baffle our side long. We're not the lads to be stuck up like those soft cakes over t'other way. I bet ye he'll repent before he's ridden many miles, and just hike back."

"Pray take my chair, my dear Miss Armstrong," said Travers, with a manner he considered of the first elegance.

But the invitation appeared to have no charms for Lizzie.

"M'appen, lass, thou'dst like to see the present Mr. Travers has brought thee," interposed her father, with as insinuating a tone as he could assume.

"I must first see to the pigs, father, and feed the chickens," said Lizzie, with a toss of her head, that did not augur well for Mr. Travers's hopes, and off she ran.

"Ah, they're little cattle, the lasses," said old Armstrong, as the door slammed behind her. "You must get quietly near them, or they're off like a hurt grouse; they're shy birds, and there's no rule for trapping 'em. Winning a woman is for all the world like catching a colt; you shake the oats, and just as you think you've got the bridle all but on, away she goes, with a kick of her heels, and you've got to begin again. But who's that?" (There was a knock at the door.) "Come in, man, come in. Why it's John. Hoo is't, John?"

John entered with a glower at Travers, and a warm greeting to the old farmer.

"And hoo are the ship (sheep)? All going weel?"

"Not so well as I could wish, Mr. Armstrong. Robert Wilson has lost six in a fortnight, and how they're gone we can't either of us even guess."

The farmer's face seemed to contract, and his mouth quivered. "Mebbe," he said, with his teeth closed, "you and he have been kangaroo-hunting when you ought to have been minding them. You mind what the Scripter says about the hireling that loved not his ship because he was a hireling? That's the way all my profits go. You've left them, and been idling and hunting, or some mischief or the other; but I'll stop it out of your wages, man, never fear."

John's brows knit, and his lips compressed. "You know no one but you, Mr. Armstrong, dare call me an idler. We have not been hunting at all; we have kept as close to our work as if we had been slaves."

"Mebbe, then," said the old man, scornfully, "some black fellars have taken them from under your noses, and you hadn't the mettle to try and save them. When I first came out and began to serve, I had to fight for my master's ship. Look here." Armstrong tore open his waistcoat, and showed two broad scars where black men's spears had pierced his chest. "But you lads are nowt, now. Ye're all for lying about smoking, and making a fortune sooner than in my time we could earn enough to buy a damper: but why do you come back now? You've come here, I 'spect, only to get a word with my darter, who, I can tell you plainly, is for a richer man than you."

Travers lolled back in his chair, and sipped his champagne with infinite complacency. Already he felt himself the son-in-law of the rich colonist.

John did not condescend to notice this man's impertinence, but he turned on Armstrong. "Mr. Armstrong," he said, "I have served you faithfully for seven years, and during that time, except by flood and murrain, you know you haven't lost ten sheep. I have not fought for you, because there has been no one to fight; but when the time came, I dare say I should show better pluck than this pen-driver here."

"I won't have you sneaking away from work," said Armstrong, "and trying to wheedle away my darter. She is only fit for a rich man, who can make a lady of her, and you're wasting your time to think of her; and mark ye this, and mark it well, Mr. John Churton, I'll not stand

much more of your stuck-up ways and gentlefolks' airs. I'm a plain man, mysel', a Coomberland farmer's son, and I want men who'll work, and keep my ship together, and earn their wages. If you don't think my pay enough, and the bush is too warm for your delicate skin, you can go when you like. Your quarter's up next week, and you have your remedy. I'll stand none of your fine gentleman's airs. They may do in Lunnon, though they didn't stand much for you there; but they won't do at Gillsland."

"Very well, sir," said John, whose hand was already on the door-handle. "You have said it, and so it shall be; but remember that I came back here only from a sense of duty. If I had been perishing in the bush, and the sheep had been in danger, I wouldn't have come back here, even to put my dying hand in Lizzie's."

"I was once foolish enough to say something about you and Lizzie when the wool had sold well a year ago; but now I unsay it. Here is her future husband. You can go."

John kept a firm look on the old man, though his face was pale too.

"I come for my wages to-morrow," said Churton, "and start for Melbourne by the drays in the morning. There's the revolver you have lent me; your rifle is in the kitchen."

"Go, and be hanged. I'll have no more fine gentlemen here."

"God bless you—ta ta," said Travers, with his champagne to his lips.

As Churton opened the door Lizzie Armstrong rushed into his arms, and hid her tearful face upon his shoulder.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Armstrong, bursting into rage. "Let go my daughter, you sir, and don't darken my doors more than once more, when you come for the wages you haven't earned."

One passionate kiss, and Churton released Lizzie, and slammed the door behind him.

"And weel shut o' him," said the old farmer. "Go to your room, Lizzie. I'll have no blubbering here for a stook-oop fine gentleman. And now, then, Travers, drink to my toast—'Bonny auld Coomberland, its lads and lasses,' and if you can sing John Peel, let's have it, for it stirs my blood as weel as one of the auld Border songs."

An hour later, and just before the place was bolted up for the night, there came a tremendous blow at the front door, as if

with the butt-end of a heavy whip or pistol.

"It's that sneaking fellow John come to beg my pardon, I suppose," said old Armstrong. "I thought he had more spirit."

It was getting dark, and snatching up a great flaring tallow candle, he threw open the door.

It was not John. It was a short, thickset, bearded man, mounted on a strong black horse, spotted with foam, its eyes blood-shot, and its mouth in a thick lather. The rider wore a deep-brimmed wide-awake, and a digger's stained red shirt, over which streamed four or five heavy cables of gold chain. He had a short double-barrelled rifle slung at his back, and a six-shooter stuck on either side of the digger's belt. His long boots were splashed with mud. He was a hard, ill-favoured man, with a thick, matted black beard, small, quick eyes, thin, pale lips, and prominent, cruel-looking cheek-bones. He swung himself lightly from his horse, and stood with one hand on his horse's tangled mane.

"You've maybe heard of Jingling Geordie, the bushranger," said the man, in a hoarse, harsh voice; "has he been here lately?"

"I've not seen owt of the rascal," said Armstrong. "You're one of the police, mebbe, and are after him? You'll doubtless want a night's rest? Walk in."

"And take some fizz with us, like a jolly good fellow," hiccuped Travers.

"So you've never seen Geordie?" asked the man again, with a dry laugh, as he tied up his horse.

"What is he like?"

"Why, to tell the truth, he's the very image of me," said the man, pulling out a revolver as quick as lightning, and cocking it, "for I am him, and he's me, and we're partners for life. Now I mean to stick you up; so up with you."

The old man sullenly, Travers pale and trembling, instantly threw up their arms in the approved Australian manner, and backed into the parlour as the bushranger pushed them before him into the room, first locking the front door, and turning the key after him.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, throwing himself insolently into a chair, and tossing off Travers's full glass, "I don't want money, for I've stuck up three parties to-day, and I've as much as I can carry; but what I do want is some grub and lush, a night's shake-down, and a certain good mare I've heard of. Call the whole crew——"

"If you've got a revolver on you, fire at him," whispered the old man to Travers, as they stood with their arms up.

"Come, no whispering," said Geordie, "or I shall have to put a bullet through one of you, and I've blood enough on my hands already. Do as I tell you, old man; quick, and pipe all hands—I want to give them a short sermon. Never mind my horse; he's good for nothing; he can go to the devil his own way."

Armstrong did as he was bid, and called Lizzie. Kitty had already heard the alarm, and hidden herself in a wood cupboard in the kitchen: Lizzie came down stairs pale and crying; she gave just one scream when she saw the rough man, whom she guessed at once to be after no good; then, like a brave girl, collected herself for the worst.

"So this is the whole lot, all told. So far so good. You needn't be afraid, my pretty lass. I won't hurt you," said the bushranger. "Come, old man, what shooting-irons have you about you? It is always as well in these cases to be careful."

As he said this the man began to rummage Armstrong's pockets with all the practised care of a custom-house searcher.

"I tell you I don't carry any."

"But don't you wish you did?" said the fellow, with an odious sardonic grin. "Yes, I see that by the red in your eyes, and the white of your lips. You keep your temper, old man. I won't touch your shiners. I've got enough of my own. And don't you be frightened, miss; I'm not going to hurt the old father, though he does look mischief. As for that counter-jumper, I won't search him, for I can see he hasn't the pluck to use a pistol, even if he had one."

Lizzie shuddered as she saw the wretch's rough hands laid upon her father, a man of such rough temper and such uncontrollable passions, and every moment she expected to see a blow struck, and to hear the return shot that would stretch her father dead at her feet. "Oh, that John were here," she thought, and the next moment she trembled to think what might have happened had her lover flown at the ruffian, as he would surely have done.

"Come, now," said Geordie, "one of you, and we'll go round and bolt all the doors. I don't want any of the neighbours to know who's here; and we'll have it all snug to ourselves. Come, I say, one of you, d'ye hear, and no nonsense, for I'm rough and ready, as you'll pretty soon find, if my blood once gets up. Where are the guns and powder?"

"Well, I suppose we must e'en make the

best of a bad bargain," said Armstrong. "So come, and we'll shut the doors first. Lizzie, this gentleman will want some supper; you lock the back door, and see to it, while we go up-stairs and collect the guns. He is here, we are at his mercy, and we must just make things as pleasant as we can. He knows well enough I would kick if I could. Travers, you come with us up-stairs, and help to overhaul, and you, Lizzie, cook some steaks and get some toast ready."

Travers, with a very pale face, said he would rather stop where he was. He was evidently overcome with fear. All at once Geordie turned his cold keen eyes upon him, drew a revolver, and held it to his head.

"Come," he said, "none of that. I know your game. You want to sneak behind, and then, when we are busy up there, you'll make a rush for it, and ride off for the police. No, no, my gentleman, you go first, or I'll make cold meat of you at one touch of the trigger."

With very shaky steps Travers staggered forward, and the three men proceeded up-stairs, having first locked the lower doors.

The moment she was left alone in the kitchen, Lizzie opened the wood cupboard door, and called softly to her sister. She had resolved on a bold step.

"There is no danger now, Kitty, but keep there till he is at his meal, then I want you to do something that may save us all."

"I'll do it, Lizzie, whatever it is," was the reply. "But, oh! don't let that dreadful man see me. I'm so afraid of him. I'm sure he is going to kill us all."

Just at that moment there were sounds of feet on the stairs, a loud coarse laugh, and, just as Lizzie closed the cupboard, the man entered the kitchen with two or three guns and a bag of powder under his arm.

"I thought I heard some one talking here," he said. He looked suspiciously round, and a murderous look came into his eyes.

"I was only talking to the cat," said Lizzie, stooping down and stroking a cat, that sat gravely and sleepily on a kangaroo skin that served as hearth-rug.

The bushranger stepped to the window, and looked out, but there was no one to be seen.

"You look alive, my girl, with the supper, and don't turn sulky, it ain't no use," he said, roughly. "I have been riding since daybreak, and two dampers in twelve

hours is poor allowance. Lots of buttered cakes, mind. You are good at those things, you north-country folks, and I'll have some tea. Look alive, now, and after tea you shall give us a tune on the pianner, and we'll make a snug little party—and you leave all the doors open, so as I can hear everything."

"Get the supper soon, Lizzie," said her father. "We must just make the best of things, lass."

The moment the steak was cooked, and while Jingling Geordie was intent on ravenously devouring it, his revolver cocked by his side on the table, and the fire-arms of the house stacked safely in a corner behind the sofa on which he sat, Lizzie ran back to the kitchen, opened the cupboard door, and called in a low voice to Kitty.

"Kitty," she said, "you must drop out of the window here, and go in search of John. If he is not at Jerry Lot's he'll be at the wood-shed out beyond the last clearing by the Gelt creek. You'll know your way when the moon rises. Tell him we're in danger here, but he must not come near the place to-night, or the wretch will murder us all. It is Jingling Geordie, the bushranger, for whom government has offered two hundred pounds, dead or alive. John must watch this window, and if there is awful need for him I will hang out a white handkerchief; mind, if I do not do that he must not come near us. Will you remember all this, Kitty?"

"Yes, Lizzie, I am ready. Whatever happens I'll do whatever you tell me."

Softly, on tip-toe, the two sisters crept to the window, first softly closing the door; the little girl was then quickly lowered by Lizzie. She had scarcely descended before Geordie entered, pistol in hand.

"Why do you shut that door," he said, "when I told you not? You take care, young woman, or I shall get rough. I don't half like your looks. Come into the parlour, d'ye hear; no nonsense with me."

Again he looked out of the window, but Kitty had cowered down under shelter; he shut it, and closed and bolted the shutters. "If I thought you was carrying on any tricks, I'd shoot you like a dog. Come, lass," he said, as he threw himself on the sofa, and mixed a glass of brandy-and-water, "you play us a tune—you look like one of the musical sort. Play Let me Kiss Him for His Mother, or the Mocking Bird. I used to sing them, when I was a lad, to my young woman. Ah, she little thought I should ever be a lag out here, no more cared for than a dead dog on a dunghill."

"Take some more brandy, messmate," said old Armstrong with an almost imperceptible glance at Travers, who was smoking with the most rueful face possible, and casting constant and frightened glances at the pistol.

Geordie leaped up, snatched the bottle from Armstrong's hand, and dashed it on the floor. "You try that on again," he said; "you get your fingers once more as close as that to my six-shooter, and I'll fire a barrel straight into both of you. Don't fancy, old bufier, you'll catch a weasel like me asleep. I want no more of your drink. If I'd often drunk, I should have been at the wrong end of a rope long ago. Come, to business. Have you got any good horses, old man?"

"Not one; only rough horses for hauling timber."

"That's a lie," said Geordie, beating his fist on the table. "Keep on playing, lass—something sentimental, mind. That's a big lie; you've forgotten Fan, the fastest chestnut mare this side of Melbourne. Well, hear me now. I want her early to-morrow, and her I'll have whatever I do for it," and he gripped his pistols.

"I see you've heard of my mare," said Armstrong, with a sigh, "but she's too slight for your work—she's almost a racer, and nearly thoroughbred."

"I always ride racers when I can get them. Play on, lass; play us I am Leaving Thee in Sorrow, Annie—that's a good song, that is. My sister Nelly used to sing that. Your girl plays well, old man. Mind, the first thing to-morrow you drive the horses into the corral, and I'll see if there is anything better than the mare."

"You must take what you like, we are at your mercy," said Armstrong.

"And as for you," said Geordie to Travers, who was too frightened to speak, "you haven't a word to throw to a dog. Come, drink a tumbler of that brandy, or, by the Lord, I'll force it down your throat. I dare say you'd have been a lag yourself before now if you'd only had the courage."

Every now and then Lizzie took a frightened but steady look at the man, to see if fatigue was overcoming him, determining, upon the instant he fell asleep, to hang out the signal in the moonshine. The deserted hut to which John would have gone was a mile off along the wood. Kitty would have reached there by this time. A quarter of an hour more, and John would be watching the window. But nothing could disarm the man's suspicions, though from time to time he grew jovial, and

struck in with a rough chorus to the popular tunes Lizzie played, with affected readiness.

" Whenever you like to go to your room, mister, it is ready," said Armstrong.

" Thank you, cap'en," he said, stretching his dirty boots on the neat sofa; " you may go when you like, this'll do for me. I always sleep, mind, with one eye open, and all my friends ready round me." As he said this he put a six-shooter by him on the table, with half a dozen cartridges, and placed a second under the sofa cushion.

" Thanks, my darling, for your music. Don't be afraid of me. We old lags don't often get a treat in the bush like that. Take my advice; don't you go and marry that dandy counter-jumper there; he hasn't the pluck of a mouse. Leave all your doors open, and we shall do very well. Be off with ye. Breakfast at five-thirty, please, and if you don't wake I'll start yer."

" If John had been here, and I hadn't been so harsh towards him," said Armstrong to his daughter, as they parted for the night, " things might have gone different. As for that fellow Travers, he's the greatest skunk that ever crawled, and he shouldn't have you now if he was the only man left in the world. Ah, if we could only have drugged that rascal's tea!"

" No more talking up there," shouted a fierce voice from the parlour. " Go to bed. You've got to turn out early."

What a night of agony Lizzie spent, lying awake in the moonlight that streamed over her bed, and listening to every sound! Once, when all was still, she almost resolved to steal down, bare-footed, to the kitchen, and listen at the window if she could hear John. Then a dreadful thought seized her that he might have ridden far away, and never met Kitty at all. She might never see him again. He was proud and high-spirited, and would never brook an insult. Then, as she sat up and listened, she heard some night bird call, and the man below rose, strode to the kitchen, opened the window, and looked out! Suppose he saw John, and fired at him! It seemed endless, that night of miserable, anxious watching.

But she was not forsaken. All that night John, whom Kitty had found lighting a fire in the desolate hut preparatory to starting early in the morning, was watching the house from a clump of trees some two hundred yards off. Sometimes he resolved, unarmed—for he had no revolver—

to go up boldly, knock at the door, and, when the man came, to at once grapple with him. Then the certainty of this scheme being fruitless made him roll in anguish on the grass. All at once a sudden thought seized him. He remembered that Wilson, when they both started for the bush, had hidden away an old duck-gun in the roof of the hut they used to occupy. He scarcely knew what use the gun could be against a man like Jingling Geordie, triply armed, and ready for murder; but in the dim light, for the moon was now setting, he went back and searched and searched in vain. Then he lay down and slept, and at the first streak of light he rose, and, with feverish eagerness, searched again in every nook of the roof. All at once, at the gable end, his hand touched a long packet. It was a gun wrapped in oil-cloth. He had powder left, but no bullets. If even flames broke out of the roof, or Lizzie's signal appeared waving at the first light, he was powerless still to strike a blow in her defence. Again he went out, threw himself down just inside a clump of stringy-bark trees, and watched as intently as a deer-stalker, who knows the moment for a shot is near.

As he watched a figure came through the dim light slowly towards him. It was an old stableman of Armstrong's, riding along with a melancholy air. As he passed the wood John called out to him:

" Where are you going to?"

" What, is that you, Mr. John? I heard you was back. Why, going on a bad errand. Going to get the horses for that rascal to choose from—a bushranger that got in last night. Mr. Armstrong was round for me with him before daybreak. He is going to take our chestnut mare."

" Have you got any bullets, Ned?" said John, in a quick dry voice. " I may want one or two."

" I don't think I have one," said the man, searching both his pockets in vain. " Yes, I have," he cried out, with a sudden burst of delight; " yes, I have got three here, and a pinch of powder, but, Lor' a mussy, don't venture your luck against a born devil like that, who's murdered a dozen men. A bullet is no use for an old rusty fowling-piece like that; and if he even sees you lurking about near the horses he'll kill you before you can throw up your hands."

" We shall see," was Clurton's answer, and the words hissed through his clenched teeth.

" This isn't true that I hear about your

going, Mr. Churton? What, leave Miss Lizzie, and you so fond of each other?"

"It is no time to talk of that, Ned;" then he grasped the man's shoulder so that he winced. "How did Mr. Armstrong seem when he came to you this morning?"

"He seemed sulky about Jingling Geordie. But he knew very well that if he kicked at anything, there was a bullet ready for him."

"He is not a man to have borne much. And the man himself—Geordie?"

"He was devil-may-care enough. Like a fellow who had got the game in his own hands. I heard him telling Muster Armstrong that he had been living on his sheep at Bunyong Creek."

"Bunyong Creek? Then it was he," said Churton, hammering down savagely a bullet which he had been biting into shape. "Oh, I'll speak to him! When will they be here?"

"In about ten minutes; but for God's sake don't provoke Jingling Geordie, or threaten him. I heard him boast of the murders he has committed, more than he could count on his ten fingers; he has two six-shooters in his belt, and he'll kill you with no more heed than if you were a rat. Take my advice, and let him alone."

"The God who sent David with a sling and a stone against the giant will help me. It is no use talking to me."

"A wilful man must have his way," said the old man; "but mind, I warned you. I shall never see you alive again, Mr. Churton; you might just as well put your hand in a lion's mouth as threaten that man."

"It is Lizzie's favourite mare," said Churton; "and he shan't have her till he has walked over my body."

With hands uplifted, in mute protestation, the man rode off to drive in the horses, and left Churton there, still driving at the refractory bullet, which had stuck in the gun, and would not go down close upon the powder. If the bullet could not be forced down, he would have to meet the man, he was determined to confront, helpless. Besides, was it not cowardly to lurk there, even for a murderer? Again, if he stepped forward and met Geordie, perhaps, suspecting treachery, the rascal's first act would be to shoot down Lizzie's father. Torn to pieces by these conflicting feelings, John's mind finally settled down to a determination to join the old stableman, leave his gun behind, take his place in driving in the horses, and once in the paddock, to get as

near as possible to the bushranger, and act as circumstances required.

But Churton wavered too long. At that very moment, as he lay down behind a huge trunk of a gum tree, not sixty yards from the paddock into which the horses just then raced, hurried by the stableman's shouts, Jingling Geordie and Mr. Armstrong came down a field-path from the house. They walked side by side; Geordie was talkative and triumphant, Mr. Armstrong silent and gloomy, like a prisoner in custody.

"I hear this mare of yours is a clipper; but I shall see what metal she has in her before half an hour's over."

"I tell you the truth, man. It is hard to part with her. My girl, Lizzie, is fond of her, and she is fond of Lizzie, and I allow I'd sooner you'd take all the paddockful than her."

"Come, I think you have got off pretty tidy," said the black-bearded fellow, with malice in his small, half-closed eyes, as he swung his six-shooter nearer to his hand and surveyed the path before him with a caution and suspicion evidently habitual. "I've taken none of your shinners. I've not hurt anything, and now you grudge me this mare. That's hardly grateful of you, old man. At some houses I've lodged at I can tell you I've come away with rather fuller pockets. Suppose, now, I'd carried off your daughter?"

The old north-countryman's brow darkened. "And do you think I'd have let her go without a struggle?"

"Struggle. Look at these arguments of mine," and Geordie laughed a wicked laugh, and tapped the two six-shooters in his belt. "Much good your struggling would have been. I know where your brains would have been by this time. Now, look here, do you know what this ugly head of mine is worth?" and Geordie took off his wideawake, and shook his coarse fell of black matted hair with a certain vulgar pride.

Armstrong said, "I know there is a reward offered for you."

"Two hundred pounds; more than's been offered for any one since my old comrade Morgan. It is worth having. Try and earn it. Here, I'll give you a revolver. Have a crack at me; but mind I shall fire first, old pal."

At that moment Armstrong caught a glimpse of a gun-barrel pointed dead at Geordie, and seeing it he drew back, to let the man, whoever it might be in ambuscade, get a clear shot. Geordie did not see the

barrel glitter, but he observed Armstrong fall back a step, and quick as lightning he put his hand to his belt and drew his revolver. A second; and the old man would have been killed; but before Geordie could cock the six-shooter, there was a crack, a thin gush of fire, and, as he turned, a heavy bullet struck him full in the lower part of the chest. He threw up his arms, uttered half a curse, and fell dead upon his face.

Almost before the body could touch the ground, Churton had risen from behind the tree, and with clubbed gun, ran like a deer to where the corpse lay. He knelt, tore open Geordie's shirt, and felt his heart — it had ceased to beat. He snatched the revolver from the ruffian's stiffening hand, and rose and stood before Armstrong.

"He is dead," he said. "I was loth to kill him that way, but when I saw the villain put his hand to his belt, I knew he meant murder, and the odds were too much against you for me to spare him."

"You've saved my life, John Churton," said Armstrong, "and I thank you. I dare say you only value me for Lizzie's sake, and I don't know that I deserve more of you, for I was rough and ungrateful last night, and I forgot what I owed you for good service."

"I never felt such a terrible moment," said Churton, "as that was when I took aim at the wretch that lies here; for I knew if I missed it was sudden death for you, and I didn't know how this old shotgun would carry a bullet; but it went straight, and the men this wretch murdered are at last avenged. Still, somehow, I wish it had been a fair up-and-down fight, when he was stealing your sheep."

"Tut, man, there is nothing to regret," said the old farmer, grasping Churton's hand warmly; "the two hundred pounds reward will help to buy some sheep to start you and Lizzie."

"I'll not touch a penny of the blood-money. I killed him to save Lizzie's father."

"Well, you were always a queer lad. Let who will have it, Lizzie is yours."

John Churton pressed his hand. Then he said: "It was a lucky shot, but I'd rather have struck him down in fair fight, bad as he was; and after all, but for brave little Kitty, I might have been in the hut by the old clearing, and never have known till I was fifty miles away that you had been all murdered."

"John Churton, you're a brave fellow, and you deserve my daughter," said Arm-

strong, "and you shall have this old place when my time comes."

Need I describe the meeting of Lizzie and John? Never was happiness so sudden, so complete, so deserved. A brave man and a brave girl had long since exchanged hearts, and if ever there was an hour of perfect happiness in this wicked world it was that first hour of their re-meeting. As for Travers, he sat silent, cowed, and despised.

The next morning Armstrong, going out very early to the shed where the body lay awaiting the inquest and the gathering of the jury from far-off stations, found a man with his back towards him, kneeling over the body, and busy in removing the beard for a trophy to show at Melbourne.

Armstrong indignantly pushed the man over the body. It was Travers.

"I see what you want," said the old farmer, "to go off with that and tell lies about it at the bar-rooms at Melbourne. A cur like you, too! Get up, saddle your horse, and be off; my daughter is only fit for a brave man. I'll send out your breakfast to you when you're on horseback. Be off, quick—d'y'e hear. You can tell lies enough without wanting a proof."

So Travers slunk away.

"THANK you, sir-r-r," said the president. "Any way, that story just settles one p'int, and proves what a good thing it is never to stir without your shootin'-irons. If your friend had followed our fashion this side, and always carried his six-shooter around with him, he'd have held a stronger suit than an old play-out duck-gun. Who's next? A lady this time. What do you say, ma'am?" he continued, to the quiet German woman with the strange sad yearning look in her large eyes, who sat on Harry Middleton's other side, gently arranging the bandages on his wounded arm. "Sorry I don't know your name, so as to speak civilier, but p'raps you've got a story you can tell us?"

"They call me Sister Johanna," she said, in a composed voice, which had a touch of melancholy and something of weariness in its tone. "My story, such as it is, is but a sad one; but it will be a relief to me to put into words what is for ever passing through my brain, and if you wish it, I will gladly speak."

Then, after bringing her kindly duties to her patient to an end, she began to speak, at first with some hesitation, but presently with a curious earnestness, very different

to the ordinary composure of her manner. And this was—

SISTER JOHANNA'S STORY.

If you have ever heard of the Grödner Thal, then you will also have heard of the village of St. Ulrich, of which I, Johanna Räderer, am a native, and in which I lived all my life until I crossed the ocean. And if, as is more likely, you have never heard of either, then still, though without knowing it, many of you have, even from your earliest childhood, been familiar with the work by which, for many generations, we have lived and prospered. Your rocking-horse, your Noah's ark, your first doll, came from St. Ulrich—for the Grödner Thal is the children's paradise, and supplies the little ones of all Europe with toys. In every house throughout the village—I might almost say in every house throughout the valley—you will find wood-carving, painting, or gilding perpetually going on; except only in the haymaking and harvest-time, when all the world goes up to the hills to mow and reap, and breathe the mountain air. Nor do our carvers carve only grotesque toys. All the crucifixes that you see by the wayside, all the carved stalls and tabernacles, all the painted and gilded saints decorating screens and side altars in our Tyrolean churches, are the work of their hands.

After what I have said, you will no doubt have guessed that ours was a family of wood-carvers. My father, who died when my sister and I were quite little children, was a wood-carver. My mother was also a wood-carver, as were her mother and grandmother before her; and Katrine and I were of course brought up by her to the same calling. But, as it was necessary that one should look after the home duties, and as Katrine was always more delicate than myself, I gradually came to work less and less at the business, till at last, what with cooking, washing, mending, making, spinning, gardening, and so forth, I almost left it off altogether. Nor did Katrine work very hard at it, either; for, being so delicate, and so pretty, and so much younger than myself, she came, of course, to be a good deal spoiled, and to have her own way in everything. Besides, she grew tired, naturally, of cutting nothing but cocks, hens, dogs, cats, cows, and goats; which were all our mother had been taught to make, and, consequently, all she could teach to her children.

"If I could carve saints and angels, like

Ulrich, next door," Katrine used sometimes to say; "or if I might invent new beasts out of my own head, or if I might cut caricature nutcrackers of the Herr Purger and Don Wian, I shouldn't care if I worked hard all day; but I hate the cocks and hens, and I hate the dogs and cats, and I hate all the birds and beasts that ever went into the ark—and I only wish they had all been drowned in the Deluge, and not one left for a pattern!"

And then she would fling her tools away, and dance about the room like a wild creature, and mimic the Herr Purger, who was the great wholesale buyer of all our St. Ulrich ware, till even our mother, grave and sober woman as she was, could not help laughing, till the tears ran down her cheeks.

Now the Ulrich next door, of whom our little Katrine used to speak, was the elder of two brothers named Finazzer, and he lived in the house adjoining our own; for at St. Ulrich, as in some of the neighbouring villages, one frequently sees two houses built together under one roof, with gardens and orchards surrounded by a common fence. Such a house was the Finazzers' and ours; or I should rather say both houses were theirs, for they were our landlords, and we rented our cottage from them by the year.

Ulrich, named after the patron saint of our village, was a tall, brown, stalwart man, very grave, very reserved, very religious, and the finest wood-sculptor in all the Grödner Thal. No madonnas, no angels could compare with his for heavenly grace and tenderness; and for his Christs, a great foreign critic, who came to St. Ulrich some ten or twelve years ago, said that no other modern artist with whose works he was acquainted, could treat that subject with anything like the same dignity and pathos. But then, perhaps, no other modern artist went to his work in the same spirit, or threw into it not only the whole force of a very noble and upright character, but all the loftiest aspirations of a profoundly religious nature.

His younger brother, Alois, was a painter—fair-haired, light-hearted, pleasure-loving; as unlike Ulrich, both in appearance and disposition, as it is possible to conceive. At the time of which I am telling you, he was a student in Venice, and had already been three years away from home. I used to dream dreams, and weave foolish romances about Alois and my little Katrine, picturing to myself how he would some day come home, in the flush,

perhaps, of his first success, and finding her so beautiful and a woman grown, fall in love with her at first sight, and she with him; and the thought of this possibility became at last such a happy certainty in my mind, that when things began to work round in quite the other way, I could not bring myself to believe it. Yet so it was, and, much as I loved my darling, and quick-sighted as I had always been in everything that could possibly concern her, there was not a gossip in St. Ulrich who did not see what was coming before I even suspected it.

When, therefore, my little Katrine came to me one evening in the orchard, and told me, half laughing, half crying, that Ulrich Finazzer had that day asked her to be his wife, I was utterly taken by surprise.

"I never dreamed that he would think of me, dear," she said, with her head upon my bosom. "He is so much too good and too clever for such a foolish birdie as poor little Katrine."

"But—but my birdie loves him?" I said, kissing her bright hair.

She half lifted her head, half laughed through her tears, and said with some hesitation:

"Oh, yes, I love him. I—I think I love him—and then I am quite sure he loves me, and that is more than enough."

"But, Katrine——"

She kissed me, to stop the words upon my lips.

"But you know quite well, dear, that I never could love any lover half as much as I love you; and he knows it, too, for I told him so just now, and now please don't look grave, for I want to be very happy to-night, and I can't bear it."

And I also wanted her to be very happy, so I said all the loving things I could think of, and when we went in to supper we found Ulrich Finazzer waiting for us.

"Dear Johanna," he said, taking me by both hands, "you are to be my sister now."

And then he kissed me on the forehead. The words were few; but he had never spoken to me or looked at me so kindly before, and somehow my heart seemed to come into my throat, and I could not answer a word.

It was now the early summer time, and they were to be married in the autumn. Ulrich, meanwhile, had his hands full of work, as usual, and there was, besides, one important task which he wanted to complete before his wedding. This task was a Christ, larger than life, which he designed as a gift to our parish church, then under-

going complete restoration. The committee of management had invited him, in the first instance, to undertake the work as an order, but Ulrich would not accept a price for it. He preferred to give it as a free-will offering, and he meant it to be the best piece of wood-sculpture that had ever yet left his hand. He had made innumerable designs for it, both in clay and on paper, and separate studies from life for the limbs, hands, and feet. In short, it was to be no ordinary piece of mere conventional Grödner Thal work, but a work of art in the true sense of the word. In the meanwhile, he allowed no one to see the figure in progress—not even Katrine; but worked upon it with closed doors, and kept it covered with a linen cloth whenever his workshop was open.

So the summer time wore on, and the roses bloomed abundantly in our little garden, the corn yellowed slowly on the hill-sides, and the wild white strawberry blossoms turned to tiny strawberries, ruby-red, on every mossy bank among the fir-forests of the Seisser Alp. And still Ulrich laboured on at his great work, and sculptured many a gracious saint besides; and still the one object of all his earthly worship was our little laughing Katrine. Whether it was that, being so grave himself and she so gay, he loved her the better for the contrast, I cannot tell; but his affection for her seemed to deepen daily. I watched it as one might watch the growth of some rare flower, and I wondered sometimes if she prized it as she ought. Yet I scarcely know how, child that she was, she should ever have risen to the heights or sounded the depths of such a nature as his. That she could not appreciate him, however, would have mattered little, if she had loved him more. There was the pity of it. She had accepted him, as many a very young girl accepts her first lover, simply because he was her first. She was proud of his genius—proud of his preference, proud of the house, and the lands, and the worldly goods that were soon to be hers; but for that far greater wealth of love, she held it all too lightly. Seeing this, day after day, with the knowledge that nothing I could say would make things better, I fell, without being conscious of it, into a sad and silent way, that arose solely out of my deep love for them both, and had no root of selfishness in it, as my own heart told me then, and tells me to this day.

In the midst of this time, so full of happiness for Ulrich, so full of anxiety for me, Alois Finazzer came home suddenly.

We had been expecting him in a vague way ever since the spring, but the surprise, when he walked in unannounced, was as great as if we had not expected him at all. He kissed us all on both cheeks, and sat down as if he had not been away for a day.

"What a rich fellow I am!" he said, joyously. "I left only a grave elder brother behind when I went to Venice, and I come back finding two dear little sisters to welcome me home again."

And then he told us that he had just taken the gold medal at the Academy, that he had sold his prize picture for two hundred florins, and that he had a pocketful of presents for us all—a necklace for Katrine, a spectacle-case for our mother, and a house-wife for myself. When he put the necklace round my darling's neck he kissed her again, and praised her eyes, and said he should some day put his pretty little sister into one of his pictures.

He was greatly changed. He went away a curly-headed lad of eighteen, he came back a man, bearded, self-confident. Three years, at certain turning-points on the road of life, work with us more powerfully, whether for better or worse, than would ten years at any other period. I thought I liked Alois Finazzer better when he was those three years younger.

Not so Katrine, however—not so our mother—not so the St. Ulrich folk, all of whom were loud in his praise. Handsome, successful, gay, generous, he treated the men, laughed with the girls, and carried all before him.

As for Ulrich, he put his work aside, and cleared his brow, and made holiday for two whole days, going round with his brother from house to house, and telling every one how Alois had taken the great gold medal in Venice. Proud and happy as he was, however, he was prouder and happier still when, some three or four days later, at a meeting of the church committee of management, the commune formally invited Alois to paint an altar-piece for the altar of Sant' Marco at the price of three hundred florins.

That evening Ulrich invited us to supper, and we drank Alois's health in a bottle of good Barbera wine. He was to stay at home now, instead of going back to Venice, and he was to have the large room at the back of Ulrich's workshop for a studio.

"I'll bring your patron saint into my picture if you will sit for her portrait, Katrine," said Alois, laughingly.

And Katrine blushed and said, "Yes;" and Ulrich was delighted, and Alois pulled out his pocket-book, and began sketching her head on the spot.

"Only you must try to think of serious things, and not laugh when you are sitting for a saint, my little *mädchen*," said Ulrich, tenderly; whereupon Katrine blushed still more deeply, and Alois, without looking up from his drawing, promised that they would both be as grave as judges whenever the sittings were going on.

And now there began for me a period of such misery that even at this distance of time I can scarcely bear to speak or think of it. There, day after day, was Alois painting in his new studio, and Katrino sitting to him for Catarina, while Ulrich, unselfish, faithful, trustful, worked on in the next room, absorbed in his art, and not only unconscious of treachery, but incapable of conceiving it as a possibility. How I tried to watch over her, and would fain have watched over her still more closely if I could, is known to myself alone. My object was to be with her throughout all those fatal sittings; Alois's object was to make the appointments for hours when my household duties compelled me to remain at home. He soon found out that my eyes were opened. From that moment it was a silent unacknowledged fight between us, and we were always fighting it.

And now, as his work drew nearer to completion, Ulrich seemed every day to live less for the people and things about him, and more for his art. Always somewhat over silent and reserved, he now seemed scarcely conscious at times even of the presence of others. He spoke and moved as in a dream; went to early mass every morning at four; fasted three days out of seven; and, having wrought himself up to a certain pitch of religious and artistic excitement, lived in a world of his own creation, from which even Katrino was for the time excluded. Things being thus, what could I do but hold my peace? To speak to Ulrich would have been impossible at any time; to speak to my darling (she being, perhaps, wholly unconscious) might be to create the very peril I dreaded; to appeal to Alois, I felt beforehand, would be worse than useless. So I kept my trouble to myself, and prayed that the weeks might pass quickly, and bring their wedding-day.

Now, just about this time of which I am telling (that is, towards the middle of August) came round the great annual *fête*, or *Sagro*, as we call it, at Botzen; and to

this fête Katrine and I had for some years been in the habit of going, walking to Atzmary the first day by way of Castelruth, sleeping near Atzmary in the house of our aunt, Maria Bernhard, whose husband kept the *gasthaus* called the Schwarzen Adler, taking the railway next morning from Atzmary to Botzen, and there spending the day of the Sagro, and returning in the same order as we came. This year, however, having the dread of Alois before my eyes, and knowing that Ulrich would not leave his work, I set my face against the Botzen expedition, and begged my little sister, since she could not have the protection of her betrothed husband, to give it up. And so I think she would have done at first, but that Alois was resolute to have us go, and at last even Ulrich urged it upon us, saying he would not have his little *mädchen* baulked of her festa simply because he was too busy to take her there himself. Would not Johanna be there to take care of her, Alois to take care of them both? So my protest was silenced, and we went.

It is a long day's walk from St. Ulrich to Atzmary, and we did not reach our aunt's house till nearly supper-time, so that it was quite late before we went up to our room. And now my darling, after being in wild spirits all day, became suddenly silent, and instead of going to bed, stayed by the window, looking at the moon.

"What is my birdie thinking of?" I said, putting my arm about her waist.

"I am thinking," she said, softly, "how the moon is shining now at St. Ulrich, on our mother's bedroom window, and on our father's grave."

And with this she laid her head down upon my shoulder, and cried as if her heart would break.

I have reproached myself since for letting that moment pass as I did. I believe I might have had her confidence if I had tried, and then what a world of sorrow might have been averted from us all!

We reached Botzen next morning in time for the six o'clock mass, and went to high mass again at nine, and strolled among the booths between the services. Here Alois, as usual, was very free with his money, buying ribbons and trinkets for Katrine, and behaving in every way as if he, and not Ulrich, were her acknowledged lover. At eleven, having met some of our St. Ulrich neighbours, we made a party, and dined all together; and after dinner the young men proposed to take us to see an exhibition of rope-dancers and tumblers. Now I knew that Ulrich would not ap-

prove of this, and I entreated my darling for his sake, if not for mine, to stay away. But she would not listen to me.

"Ulrich, Ulrich!" she repeated, pettishly. "Don't tease me about Ulrich; I am tired of his very name!"

The next moment she had taken Alois's arm, and we were in the midst of the crowd.

Finding she would go, I, of course, went also, though sorely against my inclination; and one of our St. Ulrich friends gave me his arm, and got me through. The crowd, however, was so great that I lost sight somehow of Alois and Katrine, and found myself landed presently inside the booth, and sitting on a front seat next to the orchestra, alone with the St. Ulrich people. We kept seats for them as long as we could, and stood upon the bench to look for them, till at last the curtain rose, and we had to sit down without them.

I saw nothing of the performance. To this day I have no idea how long it lasted, or what it consisted of. I remember nothing but the anxiety with which I kept looking towards the door, and the deadly sinking at my heart as the minutes dragged by. To go in search of them was impossible, for the entrance was choked, and there was no standing-room in any part of the booth, so that even when the curtain fell we were fully another ten minutes getting out.

You have guessed it, perhaps, before I tell you. They were not in the market-place; they were not at the *gasthaus*; they were not in the cathedral.

"The tall young man in a grey and green coat, and the pretty girl with a white rose in her hair?" said a bystander. "Tush, my dear, don't be uneasy. They are gone home; I saw them running towards the station more than half an hour ago."

So we flew to the station, and there one of the porters, who was an Atzmary man, and knew us both, confirmed the dreadful truth. They were gone indeed, but they were not gone home. Just in time to catch the express, they had taken their tickets through to Venice, and were at this moment speeding southwards.

How I got home—not stopping at all at Atzmary, but going straight away on foot in the broiling afternoon sun—never resting till I reached Castelruth, a little after dusk—lying down outside my bed, and sobbing all the night, getting up at the first glimmer of grey dawn, and going on again before the sun was up—how I did all this, faint for want of food, yet unable to eat;

weary for want of rest, yet unable to sleep—I know not. Yet I did it, and was home again at St. Ulrich, kneeling beside our mother's chair, and comforting her as best I could, by seven.

"How is Ulrich to be told?"

It was her first question. It was the question I had been asking myself all the way home. I knew well, however, that I must be the one to break it to him. It was a terrible task, and I put it from me as long as possible. When, at last, I did go, it was past mid-day. The workshop door was open—the Christ, just showing a vague outline through the folds, was covered with a sheet, and standing up against the wall—and Ulrich was working on the drapery of a St. Francis, the splinters from which were flying off rapidly in every direction. Seeing me on the threshold, he looked up and smiled.

"So soon back, liebe Johanna?" he said. "We did not expect you till evening."

Then, finding I made no answer, he paused in his work, and said, quickly:

"What is the matter? Is she ill?"

I shook my head. "No," I said, "she is not ill."

"Where is she, then?"

"She is not ill," I said, again, "but—she is not here."

And then I told him. He heard me out in dead silence, never moving so much as a finger, only growing whiter as I went on. Then, when I had done, he went over to the window, and remained standing with his back towards me for some minutes.

"And you?" he said, presently, still without turning his head. "And you—through all these weeks—you never saw or suspected anything?"

"I feared—I was not sure——"

He turned upon me with a terrible pale anger in his face.

"You feared—you were not sure!" he said, slowly. "That is to say, you saw it going on, and let it go on, and would not put out your hand to save us all! False! false! false!—all false together—false love, false brother, false friend!"

"You are not just to me, Ulrich," I said; for to be called false by him was more than I could bear.

"Am I not just? Then I pray that God will be more just to you, and to them, than I can ever be; and that His justice may be the justice of vengeance—swift, and terrible, and without mercy."

And saying this he laid his hand on the veiled Christ, and cursed us all three with a terrible, passionate curse, like the curse of a prophet of old.

For one moment my heart stood still, and I felt as if there were nothing left for me but to die; but it was only for that one moment; for I knew, even before he had done speaking, that no words of his could harm either my poor little erring Katrine or myself. And then, having said so as gently as I could, I formally forgave him in her name and mine, and went away.

That night Ulrich Finazzer shut up his house and disappeared, no one knew whither. When I questioned the old woman who lived with him as servant, she said that he had paid and dismissed her a little before dusk; that she then thought he was looking very ill, and that she had observed how, instead of being, as usual, hard at work all day in the workshop, he had fetched his gun out of the kitchen about two o'clock, and carried it up to his bedroom, where, she believed, he had spent nearly all the afternoon cleaning it. This was all she had to tell; but it was more than enough to add to the burden of my terrors.

Oh, the weary, weary time that followed—the long, sad, solitary days—the days that became weeks—the weeks that became months—the autumn that chilled and paled, as it wore on towards winter—the changing woods—the withering leaves—the snow that whitened daily on the great peaks round about! Thus September and October passed away, and the last of the harvest was gathered in, and November came with bitter winds and rain; and, save a few hurried lines from Katrine, posted in Perugia, I knew nothing of the fate of all whom I had loved and lost.

"We were married," she wrote, "in Venice, and Alois talks of spending the winter in Rome. I should be perfectly happy if I knew that you and Ulrich had forgiven us."

This was all. She gave me no address; but I wrote to her at the Poste Restante, Perugia, and again to the Poste Restante, Rome; both of which letters, I presume, lay unclaimed till destroyed by the authorities, for she never replied to either.

And now the winter came on in earnest, as winter always comes in our high valleys, and Christmas-time drew round again; and, on the eve of St. Thomas, Ulrich Finazzer returned to his house as suddenly and silently as he had left it.

Next-door neighbours as we were, we should not have known of his return but for the trampled snow upon the path, and the smoke going up from the workshop chimney. No other sign of life or occupation

was to be seen. The shutters remained unopened. The doors, both front and back, remained fast locked. If any neighbour knocked, he was left to knock unanswered. Even the old woman, who used to be his servant, was turned away by a stern voice from within, bidding her begone and leave him at peace.

That he was at work was certain; for we could hear him in the workshop by night as well as by day. But he could work there as in a tomb, for the room was lighted by a window in the roof.

Thus St. Thomas's Day, and the next day, which was the fourth Sunday in Advent, went by, and still he, who had ever been so constant at mass, showed no sign of coming out amongst us. On Monday our good curé walked down, all through the fresh snow (for there had been a heavy fall in the night), on purpose to ask if we were sure that Ulrich was really in his house; if we had yet seen him; and if we knew what he did for food, being shut in there quite alone; but to these questions we could give no satisfactory reply.

That day, when we had dined, I put some bread and meat in a basket, and left it at his door; but it lay there untouched all through the day and night, and in the morning I fetched it back again, with the food still in it.

This was the fourth day since his return. It was very dreadful—I cannot tell you how dreadful—to know that he was so near, yet never even to see his shadow on a blind. As the day wore on my suspense became intolerable. To-night, I told myself, would be Christmas Eve, to-morrow Christmas Day. Was it possible that he would let both anniversaries go by thus? Was it possible that his heart would not soften if he remembered our happy Christmas of only last year, when he and Katrine were not yet betrothed; how he supped with us, and how we all roasted nuts upon the hearth, and sang part-songs after supper? Then, again, it seemed incredible that he should not go to church on Christmas Day.

Thus the day went by, and the evening dusk came on, and the village choir came round singing carols from house to house, and still he made no sign.

Now what with the suspense of knowing him to be so near, and the thought of my little Katrine far away in Rome, and the remembrance of how he—he whom I had honoured and admired above all the world my whole life long—had called down curses on us both the very last

time that he and I stood face to face—what with all this, I say, and what with the season and its associations, I had such a great restlessness and anguish upon me that I sat up trying to read my Bible long after mother had gone to bed. But my thoughts wandered continually from the text, and at last the restlessness so gained upon me that I could sit still no longer, and so got up and walked about the room.

And now suddenly, while I was pacing to and fro, I heard, or fancied I heard, a voice in the garden calling to me by name. I stopped—I listened—I trembled. My very heart stood still! Then, hearing no more, I opened the window and outer shutters, and instantly there rushed in a torrent of icy cold air and a flood of brilliant moonlight, and there, on the shining snow below, stood Ulrich Finazzer.

Himself, and yet so changed! Worn, haggard, grey.

I saw him, I tell you, as plainly as I see my own hand at this moment. He was standing close, quite close, under the window, with the moonlight full upon him.

"Ulrich!" I said, and my own voice sounded strange to me, somehow, in the dead waste and silence of the night—"Ulrich, are you come to tell me we are friends again?"

But instead of answering me he pointed to a mark on his forehead—a small dark mark, that looked at this distance and by this light like a bruise—cried aloud with a strange wild cry, less like a human voice than a far-off echo, "The brand of Cain! The brand of Cain!" and so flung up his arms with a despairing gesture, and fled away into the night.

The rest of my story may be told in a few words—the fewer the better. Insane with the desire of vengeance, Ulrich Finazzer had tracked the fugitives from place to place, and slain his brother at mid-day in the streets of Rome. He escaped unmolested, and was well nigh over the Austrian border before the authorities even began to inquire into the particulars of the murder. He then, as was proved by a comparison of dates, must have come straight home by way of Mantua, Verona, and Botzen, with no other object, apparently, than to finish the statue that he had designed for an offering to the church. He worked upon it, accordingly, as I have said, for four days and nights incessantly, completed it to the last degree of finish, and then, being in who can tell how terrible a condition of remorse, and horror, and de-

spair, sought to expiate his crime with his blood. They found him shot through the head by his own hand, lying quite dead at the feet of the statue upon which he had been working, probably, up to the last moment, his tools lying close by, the pistol still fast in his clenched hand, and the divine pitying face of the Redeemer, whose law he had outraged, bending over him as if in sorrow and forgiveness.

Did I indeed see Ulrich Finazzer that night of his self-murder? If I did so with my bodily eyes, and it was no illusion of the senses, then most surely I saw him not in life, for that dark mark which looked to me in the moonlight like a bruise was the bullet-hole in his brow.

But did I see him? It is a question I ask myself again and again, and have asked myself for years. Ah! who can answer it?

THE buzz of comment which followed Sister Johanna's story had scarcely subsided, and Mr. Croffut had not had time to thank her in the name of the company, when a queer-looking man, with a wandering eye, and a strangely restless manner, started forward and addressed the president abruptly:

"Sir," he said, "I should like to tell you and this honourable company about Nettlefold."

"Nobody wants to stop you, stranger," returned Mr. Croffut. "You can begin as soon as you like, and go right on till you've got through with it."

"About Nettlefold," continued the stranger, taking no notice of Mr. Croffut, "Nettlefold and that clock. I am English, as you will doubtless perceive. It occurred in England. This was how it happened."

And, without further preface, he plunged into the following strange story of—

THE QUEER CLOCK.

THERE are some people who seem to thrust their friendship peregritorily upon one, much as a conjuror, in furtherance of his impostures, forces the receipt of a particular card. There is no escape; persistence triumphs, unless one adopts a course of opposition of an unusually obstinate kind. Thus Augustus Nettlefold called himself my friend, and assumed an intimate air in relation to me quite in spite of myself. I had little liking for him; I had no respect for him; we had few sympathies in common; no real bond of union existed between us; still, there he was—my friend.

He claimed to have known me for very many years; and this was true enough: our acquaintance dated, in fact, from a remote period when I had been his schoolfellow. But what of that? I had forgotten all about Augustus Nettlefold. I had completely lost sight of him for a very long while; and I could never call to mind that, even at school, I had cared particularly about him. No doubt I had, at that time, certain special cronies and comrades. But I don't think that intimate relations of this nature had ever subsisted between Nettlefold and myself. I had some dim memory of a lean, freckled, light-haired boy, usually wearing a frill round his neck, and intemperately fond of jam-puffs. Could that have been Nettlefold? or had I confounded him with some other boy? I couldn't be sure. And perhaps it didn't much matter.

But we have really need of a Statute of Limitations in regard to friendship. Claims of that kind, if not fully sustained by proof of periodical recognition and mutual agreement, should be barred by lapse of time. The intimacies of schoolboy life cannot be supposed to last for ever. When a florid, middle-aged man—bald, except as to a few weak locks of hair scantily streaking his cranium, with oily auburn whiskers and a protuberant white waistcoat—inquired of me one day whether I had not been, in my youth, a pupil at Doctor Rodwell's academy, at Turnham Green, and forthwith proclaimed himself my old schoolfellow, Augustus Nettlefold, I own that I did not feel very cordially moved towards him, or greatly interested in the recollections he laboured to revive. I frankly stated, indeed, that I did not recognise him. "I should have known you anywhere," he said; "you're not in the least altered. You're thin, you see," he went on, "and thin men don't alter much. No, you're just the same as you always were. For me, I know I'm changed. I've grown stout and rather bald; and, of course, that makes a difference. I'm uncommonly glad to see you again, old fellow; it brings back the past so pleasantly to me. Ah! there are no friends like the friends of one's boyhood! Happy boyhood! Why can't we have it all over again?"

I did not feel equal to answering this question. For my own part I sympathised but indifferently with Nettlefold's sentiments, and experienced no particular desire for the recurrence of my days of immaturity. To my thinking, the happiness of

boyhood has been on all sides very considerably over-estimated. I take it that there are unhappy boys just as there are unhappy men. I know that great part of my own youth was a state of extreme exertion and misery to me. My health was weakly. I was unable to find pleasure in the rougher practices of the playground. I was subjected to rather oppressive treatment at the hands of my more robust schoolmates; and I was, I think, undervalued and inconsiderately viewed by my preceptors. I could not contemplate, therefore, with any special enjoyment, the period of my existence that had been passed at Doctor Rodwell's academy, in company with Augustus Nettlefold, as he alleged. I did not think it worth while, however, to apprise him of my opinions in this regard.

Of myself I desire to say little further. I possessed a modest fortune, and, up to the period of my being resuscitated, as it were, by Nettlefold, I had led a life of quiet and seclusion. I was unmarried, and saw little of society. I inhabited a small but comfortable house—it happened to be my own freehold—in an unfashionable suburb of London. I was devoted to a particular branch of literary study. I hasten to add that this was in no sense of a popular kind, or one that would, however sedulously I might prosecute my labours, entitle me to any kind of general fame or public recognition. Some credit I might earn from a select and very limited class of students, sympathising with the nature of my inquiries, but not more than that. I should state, perhaps, that my toils had not attained any very definitive issue, or acquired much distinctness of form. I had really done little more than test and digest the results of previous dealings with the same subject, and amass materials for proceeding with it further and conclusively when the proper time should arrive for so doing. Meanwhile, I had collected a large and valuable library of books.

Nettlefold was a City man; but, that said, I have no clear information as to the precise nature of his occupation. He rented an office near the Bank of England, and employed a clerk or two; was versed in the mysteries of the money-market, skilled in the slang of 'Change, and appeared to be much interested in financial operations, and especially those of a speculative character. He had nothing about him, as I perceived, of the old-fashioned, plodding, City merchant. He dressed gaily, seemed to have abundant leisure,

conducted his calling whatever it may have been, after a curiously light-hearted, not to say frivolous, fashion, and comported himself altogether much more as a man of pleasure than a man of business. He appeared to me greatly to prefer the gratifications of the table to the toils of the desk. He was a great consumer of glasses of sherry at all hours, devoted much time and thought to his meals, and generally laid stress upon the attractions of good cheer. He had the appearance of rather an overfed person. His appetite was hearty, and his digestion seemed to be in a very perfect state. I know that, in these respects, I viewed him enviously. My own health was infirm, and any departure from a strict regimen was to me a serious matter.

My acquaintance with Nettlefold had been resumed in this wise. We had both attended in the character of diners at a public banquet given in honour of a certain distinguished man, with whose career I had sufficiently sympathised to quit for the occasion my secluded method of life. Nettlefold was present simply, as I believe, because he liked to dine and to advertise himself in a prominent sort of way. I chanced to sit next to him. We fell into conversation, in the course of which occurred that reference to Doctor Rodwell's establishment for young gentlemen, which I have already set forth, and we exchanged cards.

After this Nettlefold called upon me; and called again and again. I am not a rude man, and have, perhaps, little real decision or energy of character. My life has been one of contemplation rather than of action. I could not dismiss my visitor, or decline to see him; so gradually relations, such as I entirely disapproved, were established—or, as he preferred to say, re-established—between Nettlefold and myself. His motive in thus thrusting himself upon me I have a difficulty in comprehending. I remember that he sometimes bantered me—rather coarsely, as his manner was—on the nature of the investment of my small fortune. I had old-fashioned and, perhaps, timid preferences for Government stock over other forms of securities. He ridiculed Consols, describing them as "an old woman's stocking," and hinted that he could show me how to turn my means to better account. He often recurred to this subject, but never pressed it unduly. Of himself he spoke little. I gathered, however, that he had been abroad during some years of his life, and that his fortunes had fluctuated somewhat. But altogether he

gave me the idea of his being now thoroughly prosperous, and his expenditure and his mode of living certainly seemed to be on a very liberal scale.

The new kind of existence into which I was forced by Nettlefold inconvenienced me gravely. I was taken from the society of my beloved books; my cherished studies were interrupted. I feel that I ought to have resisted the blandishments of my "newly-found old friend," as he described himself. What to me were his perpetual "sherries," his profuse turtle-soup luncheons, his elaborate "little dinners?" They only made me ill. Even his choice cigars that he forced me to smoke—my recourse to tobacco having hitherto been of a very limited and occasional kind—did but disturb my nervous system. It was plain that his method of life was very ill-suited to me; and I found no real pleasure in the man's company. After all he was nothing to me, except that he persistently asserted himself to be "my friend." How could I possibly interest myself in his commercial pursuits and City talk? In one point only was I successful in opposing this importunate man. "Call me Gus," he would sometimes say; "you always used to at old Rodwell's." But call him Gus I could not, and would not; it was as much as I could do to address him plainly as Nettlefold. On his part no such scruples existed. He called me by my Christian name. He even abbreviated this to "Alf." He said that I had always been "Alf" to him at Rodwell's. I felt that this wasn't true. But I had not courage enough to say so. To the best of my recollection, no human being had ever before addressed me as "Alf;" on that subject I was prepared to make oath; still, I let Nettlefold have his way.

One day I found myself pledged to dine with Nettlefold "down the river." I had vainly sought to escape from this engagement. I was ill, nervous, shaken altogether. The weather had been exceedingly sultry; I was suffering from previous dinners with Nettlefold—to him simply everyday matters probably, but to me shameful dissipations. And my discomforts were mental, as well as of the body. I was vexed at my own feebleness of will and instability of character; I was the victim of severe self-reproach. Still, Nettlefold would take no denial.

"You must positively come, Alf," he said; "a very quiet little party, in a snug private room. The dinner shall be of the

simplest—you shall choose every dish yourself, if you like. No; I really can't spare you. This is an important occasion; in fact, a crisis in my fate has arrived—I'm going to be married! The guests are to be my intended bride, her father and mother, and an intimate friend of her family, that's all. With you and myself we shall be six in number. Now, you know, you can't refuse me—you can't, at such a time, desert the friend of your betrothal. Say you'll come. Indeed, I won't listen to a refusal. You must come."

Again I let Nettlefold have his way. What else could I do?

It was, as I have said, most sultry weather. The "snug private room" he had spoken of, proved to be a confined chamber that had been scorched all day long by the sun, and was swarming with flies. They were buzzing and clustering everywhere. The chandelier was cloudy with them, and they had so congregated about the looking-glass frame as to give it quite a piebald look. They had freely settled, too, upon a French bronze clock that stood on the mantelpiece. It was a quaintly-fashioned clock, purposely tinged here and there, after a modern fashion, with verdigris patches. A cadaverous figure of Time, very long and attenuated, and twisted of limb—I took it at first for Mephistopheles, but it was clearly meant for Time—was pointing a grisly forefinger at the dial, grinning sardonically the while. That clock caught my eye directly I entered the room; and it attracted my attention in a curious way again and again.

The window opened on to a narrow iron balcony, with all its paint shrivelled and blistered by exposure to the sun. The river was a glare of light. It was low water, and an expanse of smooth, shining, noisome mud lined the shore. The distant horizon seemed to be veiled in steam. The sun was sinking into a misty bed of angry, thunderous-looking clouds. There was not a breath of wind stirring. The heat was, indeed, almost unendurable; even reclining motionless in an easy-chair, placed between open door and open window, one grew fevered, panting, and faint. I felt as though some heavy weight were oppressing my heart, as though a cord were tightly bound round my temples, hindering the circulation of my blood, and distending all my veins in a painful degree. My voice was weak and husky when I tried to speak; my hands were strangely tremulous. I had never before felt so completely

shaken and upset. There was a floating parti-coloured mist before my eyes; my mind even seemed to be at fault. I experienced a difficulty in connecting my ideas, in controlling my memory and perceptions. Even now, as I look back upon it, that little dinner down the river has to me the vague, weird air of a fantastic vision.

I was introduced to Nettlefold's friends. I roused myself with an effort to take some measure of interest in his intended bride. She was richly dressed; a tall, thin, faded woman, with lustreless eyes, thin lips, and rather prominent teeth. She spoke with a drawl, and her manner struck me at once as arrogant and affected. "Alicia, my dear," said Nettlefold to her, "this is my old friend, Alf, of whom you've heard me speak. Alf, old boy, Miss Carberry." She slightly inclined her head as she surveyed me through her gold-rimmed eye-glasses. Her expression I judged to be hard, insolent, and cruel; yet I was prepared to learn, as I presently did from Nettlefold, that she was generally esteemed to be a lady of great personal attractions. She drew off her light kid gloves, and revealed her thin, sallow, rather sinewy, and claw-like hands, with many valuable rings circling her long bony fingers. Mr. Carberry—"great contractor, engaged in enormous undertakings," whispered Nettlefold—was a stout, mottled-faced, elderly man, with blank glassy eyes and a gingerbread-coloured wig. His wife, the mother of Alicia, was a large, fierce-browed woman, who did little but fan herself violently, setting all her many bracelets clinking and rattling till it almost seemed as though she were being fanned by some noisy system of machinery. The friend of the Carberry family—he was Alicia's cousin, I believe, —was called Major Meggott, a gaunt, jaded-looking man, with an erect military figure, bowed "cavalry" legs, and a dyed and much-waxed moustache. He was dressed in tightly-fitting dark clothes, and moved stiffly, as though buckled and trussed up in excess even of War Office regulations. He made no complaint of the heat; it was understood that he had frequently sojourned in tropical climes. His face wore a hard, artificial smile, as though to make revelation of his white, even teeth, of which he was, perhaps, proud. They also were artificial.

We sat at a circular table. Nettlefold had his future wife and mother-in-law on either side of him. I was placed between Mrs. Carberry and her husband. The

major sat next his cousin, and frequently interchanged talk with her, I noticed, in a subdued tone; otherwise we were but a silent party. A curious air of restraint and embarrassment seemed to oppress us. The dinner was of the most profuse and luxuriant description; the courses seemed interminable, and the supply of wine of all kinds was excessive. Glasses were filled and emptied incessantly; yet no elation came to the party, but rather more and more of stupefaction and depression.

We were desperately dull; a kind of lethargy succeeded to our superabundant meal. We were gorged, in fact, with Nettlefold's little dinner. Some few attempts he made to animate us, by forced clamorousness of speech and laughter; but these proved futile. We sat for the most part mute and sleepy, twiddling our wine-glasses, or trifling with a superb dessert. My sufferings, I know, were acute.

The heat was still intense; the day had departed, but the night was close, sultry, and storm-laden. Not to add to the almost stifling temperature of the room, the lights of the chandelier were kept as low as possible. Now and then the murky sky without was quivering and afame with lightning, which seemed to flash a white glare upon the faces round the table, and reduce the gas-lights above us to a dull, yellow hue. And now the thunder, that had long been rumbling and muttering fiercely in the distance, drew nearer to us. Presently it was rolling, and roaring, and crackling with the utmost violence close at hand.

"Shut the windows, for God's sake!" cried some one. All looked pale, I thought; but it might have been only the white flashing of the lightning in our faces.

Nettlefold ordered some more wine. "We must have something to cheer us," he said, with a hollow laugh. Wine was with him a panacea for all maladies; a remedy to be resorted to on every occasion.

"It's really the devil of a storm, you know," remarked the major. He added, however, that he had experienced many worse in the tropics. "Don't be frightened," he said to Alicia; but she was frightened. Old Mr. Carberry helped himself to pine-apple; Mrs. Carberry fanned herself violently, but less regularly than before. It was as though the machinery which kept her fan in motion wanted oiling, or had got somehow out of gear.

A waiter, pursuant to Nettlefold's bidding, filled us up glasses of sparkling red burgundy. The dark-hued wine, with its creaming head of light purple, had a

clogged, drugged, redundantly rich flavour. It was very potent liquor. We seemed to be drinking foaming laudanum. The man was particularly careful to fill our glasses to the brim.

This was not the waiter who had previously attended upon us. I was struck by a certain strangeness in this new man's aspect. He was tall and painfully thin, with long, grim, attenuated features, his pale face wearing an acrid, sardonic expression. He was very bald, save that on his brow there grew a solitary lock of dark, twisted hair, the shape of an inverted comma. I felt sure that he and I had met before. Suddenly it occurred to me that he bore a startling resemblance to the grisly Mephistophelean figure of Time, pointing to the dial of the green bronze French clock on the mantelpiece.

The wind had now risen, and an angry gust flung the windows wide open. The lightning appeared to play about the room, and especially to be attracted to the bronze clock. It was lit up again and again, as though it had been smeared with phosphorus; there was, moreover, a prevalent odour of sulphur in the atmosphere that overcame all the fumes of the dinner and the wine. The air was dense and heavy, as though loaded with the vapours of some narcotic drug.

Then came a deafening peal of thunder. The house seemed to be shaken to its foundations. This was followed by an awful silence; even Mrs. Carberry's fan was still. We were all in truth too scared to speak. The wind had gone down for the moment; no sound was audible, save only the ticking of the French clock. During the hum of dinner this could not have been heard; now it was—distinctly, almost noisily. Suddenly all was still; the clock, after a kind of gasp and, so to speak, a death-rattle in its throat, had stopped.

The strange waiter re-entered very quietly, and proceeded to set the clock going again. He wound it up very deliberately; it seemed quite a long process. We sat motionless and dumb, watching him the while.

The waiter quitted the room. What had he done to the clock? Something strange. Its tick had quickened marvelously, and the hands were whizzing round the dial with scarcely conceivable rapidity. Faster and faster they whirled round, until they were now almost imperceptible. A faint blur could be discerned upon the white face of the clock, but nothing more. Time was flying, indeed, at express speed!

Hours, days, months, years, were hurrying away at a frightful pace!

Still we sat silent; no one moved. I glanced round the room. Immediately I perceived that an extraordinary change was coming over my fellow-guests. Time was telling upon them most strangely and rapidly; so rapidly that his work could no longer be described as gradual. If for a minute I chanced to avert my eyes from one of them, during that brief interval the work of years had been wrought. Even as I looked at them, I could plainly note the process of change surely going on. I could see them grow old—old—very old, indeed! I could watch and note each step of natural decay; I was only disturbed by the rapidity of the operation. Colour fled, hair was stripped off, light wrinkles deepened into furrows, faces fell in, forms withered and bent, eyes dimmed and faded, and expired like burnt-out candles; dotage, and senility, and decrepitude did not creep, but fell suddenly, as it were, upon all. It was horrible, it was appalling, this extraordinary spectacle of certain and swift decay! I was trembling all over; my brain seemed on fire. Still, though my trepidation was extreme, and scarcely to be borne, in the midst of this frightful scene I felt that I preserved consciousness. I was perfectly sane; my recollection of that strange scene, even to minute points, is still vivid.

I turned to look at Nettlefold; he was a wizen, bent wreck of a man, with only a mere flicker of intelligence left upon his face. Presently it was clear to me that he was hopelessly insane. The change that had occurred in him during the long period that had elapsed between my quitting him at school and meeting him again a middle-aged man, was nothing to this, though it had been effected in some few minutes only.

Still the hands of the clock were whirling round and round, and time went flying on. The grim bronze figure was pointing to the dial, as though boasting of his handiwork, and grinning defiance at our discomfiture and decline. The storm raged on without, the lightning flashed furiously, and the wind was roaring and dashing hail and rain into the room. Nettlefold, I fancy, said or tried to say something, I know not what; I saw his jaws work spasmodically, but he mumbled from loss of teeth, or my sense of hearing was lost to me. For I grew old with the rest; I felt my head droop until my chin rested on my chest; my limbs were shrunk and enfeebled, and ached with age, and I could see that

my hands were as the hands of a very old man — thin, tremulous, nerveless, and swollen at the joints. As to the other guests—but indeed I cannot continue. It was horrible !

I was in a strange bed, in a strange room ; the windows were barred, and I could discern snow upon the housetops without. A strap bound me to my couch. Ice was being applied to my forehead ; my hair had been cut quite close ; shaved off, indeed.

"What has happened ? Where am I ?"

I was told afterwards that these were the first intelligible words I had spoken for many months.

"You're all safe—in St. Thomas's Hospital."

"What's been the matter ?"

"Well, we'll call it brain fever. But you'll do now."

I was forbidden to ask any more questions. It was some time before I could find any who would reply to me, or give me information I much desired upon certain points.

"Nettlefold ?" I was able to inquire at length of one who consented to supply me with intelligence of a concise kind, provided that I promised not to excite myself. "Nettlefold ?"

"In Newgate, charged under the Fraudulent Trustee Act."

"Carberry ?"

"Bankrupt—absconded."

"Alicia ?"

"Eloped with her cousin. You've nothing more to ask ?"

I had not. My mind was in an incoherent and shattered state.

"A drink of water, please."

"Here it is; now try and go to sleep, and don't bother yourself with thinking—there's a good fellow—and you'll soon get well; that is, as well as you've ever been."

I don't know sometimes whether I have ever got well or not.

UTTERING these last words in a dazed manner, and with a nervous hand playing idly about his chin, the speaker turned quickly round and disappeared in the darkness, leaving his hearers convinced that they at least had very clear notions as to his chances of ultimate recovery, whatever his own doubts on the subject might be. Indeed, Mr. Croffut seemed to express the general sentiment when he gave it as his opinion that two, or at the most three, more drinks of Bourbon whisky would be

more than enough to bring on a recurrence of the singular symptoms experienced by the stranger at Nettlefold's dinner.

"And," continued the president, "as we shall want somethin' pleasant after that, I shall ask another lady to volunteer for next turn."

"I heard a pretty little story in a strange old Flemish inn where I stayed last year," said the lady to whom he turned as he spoke. This was a self-possessed young American, who, with her mother, had just returned from Europe in time to lose everything in the great fire, and who seemed to think there was nothing very remarkable or out of the way in her present strange surroundings, and who began, with as much calmness as if she had been still sitting in the Sherman House drawing-room, this story :

A WILL O' THE WISP.

"RING, ding ! tinkle, tinkle, ting !" rang the chimes in the cathedral tower, beginning to play their airy tune in the clouds, as a bewitched old lady came into the town of Dindans one evening, following a will o' the wisp.

Dindans is a dreamy old Flemish town, with canals full of yellow-green water, and brown boats with little scarlet flags ; with strange old beetle-browed houses overshadowing the streets ; with a marketplace and fountain, a multitude of pointed gables, a cathedral covered with saints and angels, little children in muslin caps, and bells that make delicate music aloft in the air. A real traveller stopping at Dindans is a rare apparition, and people came out of their houses that evening to gaze at the little old Englishwoman who trotted behind the truck which jolted her luggage along the pavement.

When the tired little woman stopped before the wide entrance of the queer old inn, La Grue, there was no one about, and she walked into the sanded hall and glanced through the opening at the other end down the long, ancient court-yard, with its vines and gallery and rows of little windows, and on to where apple-trees and scarlet geraniums were blushing through the sunlight from the garden. A curious stone staircase wound out of the hall, and there were doors on each side of her. She hesitated, and glanced all round the unpeopled interior, until the sound of a voice came out of the nearest door.

"With her hands on her knees, and the knitting lying in her lap," said the shrewish

voice of a woman in clumsy Flemish French, "though I told her yesterday that the stocking must be done immediately."

"Thou hearest," said a man's voice, "thou must be more industrious."

"And with a look on her face that would sour the wine," continued the woman, "enough to make people think one was unkind to her."

"Thou must be more cheerful," grumbled the man.

"And see! There are travellers at our door, and here she is gossiping, so that we do not even perceive them!"

A door, which had been ajar, was quickly opened, and a young girl came out with a pale face, and eyes heavily encircled with the redness of suppressed tears. The young figure looked so much more refined than anything one could have expected in the place, that the traveller forgot her own business in the surprise. At the same moment a waiter came running to take the luggage, a little man, with a keen and perturbed face, and something like a hump on his shoulders. This was the oldest inn in Dindans, explained the girl. There were not many chambers ready, for travellers did not often stop to pass a night in the town. There was a suite of small rooms running round the court-yard, but they were at present used as fruit-lofts or lumber-closets. Over the archway into the garden was a little apartment, like a glass case, which was occupied by a gentleman who had been long established here, and must not be moved. But madame should have the best chamber, occupied by monsieur and his wife when nobody came. It should be made ready for the Dame Anglaise at a moment's notice.

The stranger had had an intention of trying to escape, but something in the girl's manner mysteriously vanquished her. She took possession of an ancient-looking room, with heavy, dark wainscots and one window, in which the only things noticeable were two well-painted portraits on the walls. They were Monsieur and Madame Van Melcke-lieke, explained Jacques, the waiter, painted by Monsieur Lawrence, the English artist, who lived in the little glass chamber, and studied all his evenings in the painting-room of the Cercle des Beaux Arts, up above in the tower; a very respectable club, which reflected credit on the house. Their meeting-room for social purposes was behind the salle-à-manger.

Madame the stranger got rid of her dust, and made herself at home in her chair by the window, feeling herself to be a dis-

pointed old woman, who had been flitting about the world for years, seeking an object which it now seemed folly to think of finding.

In the pleasant court-yard the evening sunlight was gilding the peaks of the little windows, and the grapes that hung from the vines, but leaving a cool well of shadow about the old archway, through which flamed softly the illuminated garden, brilliant with scarlet and green, and bristling with gold-tipped apple-trees. As madame looked, a man's head was thrust from one of the queer little windows in the glass chamber, an English head, brown-haired and thoughtfully intelligent. It leaned out of the golden background, glanced at a deserted ironing-table, which stood under the vines below, withdrew itself quickly, and disappeared. This was Monsieur Lawrence, no doubt.

Our little old woman had returned to her own perplexities, when the maiden who had received her again appeared at her door, a ray from the window touching the girl as she announced that madame was served. Her face shone upon the traveller out of the shadows under the doorway—a pale, delicate-featured face, with a distinct beauty of its own, which was partly owing to its subdued intensity of expression. The eyes had still that look of suffering from unshed tears; the mouth had a look of heroic patience. She hovered on the threshold, while madame fixed a sudden stare upon her, and made a sharp ejaculation in English.

"Madame's dinner!" said the girl, thinking that she had not been understood in French. But the stare was not removed from her face till she fell back abashed across the threshold, and closed the door.

"What is it?" cried the little English-woman to herself, with piteous energy. "A likeness? No, not a likeness! Yes—no—yes. Certainly not! With brooding over this matter I am becoming silly!"

Madame reflected, and made up her mind that she was too hungry and tired to think to any purpose. She dined, and Jacques brought her some coffee in her chamber.

Madame could not refrain from questioning Jacques. For many long years it had been the business of her life to question. Stine was the girl's name. She was the niece of monsieur, and her fate was sad.

"Why do they treat her badly?"

"It seems to come by nature," said Jacques. "At present she is in great disgrace because she refuses to marry me; although I have declared to monsieur that I will not have her."

"But is she not good and nice?" cried madame.

"Cependant," persisted Jacques, "I will not have her. She likes me as it is; she would hate me if I pressed her to marry me. Mon Dieu! Heaven must do something better for her than that."

Our traveller was on her way to England, and had broken her journey to rest but a night; yet she had already become curiously interested in the inhabitants of La Grue. She decided that she would make an indefinite stay at Dindans. That night she wrote some letters, and looked over papers, in her chamber. She was very much excited, and did not settle to rest until it was another day.

She was only in her first sleep when Stine got up to begin her daily work. No one in the house was awake but herself as she went into the garden, fetched vegetables, and prepared them for use, placed saucerpans on the stove, and then went into the court-yard to make ready her laundry table for an hour's ironing. As she trotted about the dewy garden and the cool, grey court-yard, she held up her head and moved lightly, delighting in the taste of fresh air, space, and peace. Her crisp, white bodice rustled with freshness, and smelt of lavender; her little apron fluttered as if enjoying itself. She went to her ironing under the vines, but had hardly plaited a frill when she remembered that she had not put the things straight in the painting-room of the club. In a minute she was busy folding up the tangled drapery that had been used in costuming a model the night before. The next moment some one came into the room, and Stine seemed all at once in a great hurry as she said :

"Good day, Monsieur Lawrence; you are up early;" turning away as she spoke, and making haste with her work.

"Stine, will you not put that away for a moment, and speak to me?"

"I have spoken, monsieur: I have said good day."

The young man looked half sad and half angry, as she opened the door, curtsied, and disappeared. The painter sat down, and began to work at his picture.

"This place is not good for me," he reflected; "I shall leave it as soon as possible. Elsewhere I shall have greater advantages, and be rid of heartache. Ah! why do I love her, when she does not care for me? Yet what a life I see before her in this place! Worked to death, or wedded to Jacques, or to the owner of the nearest estaminet. I have not much to offer her,

but in time I shall succeed; we could be frugal. She need not work for two of us as they work her here."

Lawrence was alone in the world. His art was his delight, and he had left England for the purpose of studying in one of the best continental schools. Passing through Dindans he had been attracted, first by the quaintness of the old inn, and afterwards by Stine's sad face; and here he had been content to follow his art studies, without pushing on further to the higher point of his ambition. He had been able on occasions to save the girl from harsh treatment, and he recalled now her amazement at being so shielded, her gratitude so simply shown, and the frank, warm friendship that had sprung up between them. He had watched her at her daily work in the kitchen, in the court-yard, everywhere, and had made sketches of her by stealth under every aspect. Later there had come upon him dreams in which he fancied her flitting about in a home which should be her own, and also his; and one day, when she had been in trouble, he had spoken to her, and then he had found his mistake. His love had appeared to vex her, and their friendship was at an end. She was now as sad and reserved as when he had first set eyes on her. "It must be that I am quite unlovable," thought Lawrence, "since she will rather endure unkindness than share my lot."

Meanwhile, Stine was working with nimble fingers at her ironing-table; linens were folded, and muslins crimped, while now and again a few tears flashed out of her eyes like sparks of fire, and burnt her cheeks. She remembered one day when a kind face had come into the inn and somebody had saved her from a beating; she being then considered young enough to be so punished. She remembered how light had become her tasks after that wonderful day, how the consciousness of being protected had grown habitual to her, while the wonder swelled within her at finding herself a person to be so deeply respected. She began to think that even a life like hers might come to have a beautiful side to it, till that first dreadful night, when she had told herself it would be better if she should never see Monsieur Lawrence again. The next day had brought the trouble of her disobedience about Jacques, as well as that strange, supreme moment when Lawrence, having heard of it, had asked her to be his wife, and had been refused. Yes, and she would refuse him to-morrow again, if put to it! Flash! came

a tear on the frill she was ironing, so that she was obliged to crimp one inch of it over again; and Madame Van Melckelieke came scolding into the court-yard.

The little Dame Anglaise dined at the table d'hôte that day. Monsieur sat at the top of his board, and his wife and step-daughter, a giggling girl with sharp features, sat beside him. After dinner, monsieur, his wife, and daughter went out to take coffee in the garden, sitting under an apple-tree, with a tiny table between them: monsieur in his white linen coat and scarlet skull-cap, the girl in a gay muslin with flaming bows, madame in brilliant gown and enormous gold ear-rings. The ladies chatter, monsieur smokes and drinks his coffee, and Jacques comes into the garden and announces that the Dame Anglaise wishes to join their circle. She comes, she is agreeable, she gossips familiarly over their concerns, and tells them a great deal about her travels.

So agreeable did she make herself, that next afternoon the stranger was invited once more to join the circle in the garden. Never had been known so pleasant an Englishwoman.

"Monsieur and madame," said the stranger, by-and-bye, "I am going to tell you a story. Yesterday I spoke of my travels, and you were good enough to be amused; to-day I will try to relate to you some of the most important events of my life. I have lived under the shadow of a great trouble for many years. For sixteen years I have been following a will o' the wisp."

"A will o' the wisp!" cried all the listeners.

"It has led me from country to country, and from town to town. I arrived here the other night utterly disheartened, when lo! it sprang up again; hero—under this roof—as soon as I entered."

"Here!" cried the Van Melckeliekes.

Madame shifted her chair so that she sat facing monsieur, who had taken his cigar from his mouth, and sat gazing at her in amazement, with his scarlet skull-cap a little on one side, and a slight look of apprehension on his stolid countenance.

"Let madame proceed!"

The strange old lady paused before she began her tale, and a tragic look swept across her dim blue eyes.

"My friends," she said, with a quiver in her voice, "sixteen years ago there were living in a pleasant part of England an English gentleman and his wife, who had very great wealth and a beautiful home,

and up to the time of the beginning of my story they had scarcely known what it is to grieve. They had one child, a little girl of three years old, the idol of both parents. They were fond of travelling abroad, and it happened once that they were in Paris on their way home; with them the child and three servants, including the nurse, a strange and wild-tempered woman. The lady was half afraid of this nurse, yet shrank from sending her away. The nurse was savagely fond of the child, and jealous of its mother. One day there was a quarrel, springing from this jealousy, and that evening the woman walked out of the hotel carrying the child in her arms, as if to give it an airing. She did not return, and the father and mother never heard of their child again."

Monsieur had turned on his seat and looked askance at the stranger. Madame, his wife, sat with open mouth gazing at her husband.

"Think of it, good people," went on the little old trembling lady. "I was the friend of that young mother, and I came to her in Paris in her affliction. We spent months traversing Paris, and we advertised, offering large rewards; but no tidings of woman or child were to be had. We gave up the search in Paris, and went moving from place to place, lingering so sadly, and making such frantic inquiries, that people began to point to my friend as the 'poor crazed mother who was looking for her child.' Ah, my friends, if you had seen her as I did—her eyes dim, her cheeks wasted, weeping herself to death over a toy, a tiny garment, a little shoe! Search was useless, and by the time we could prevail on her to give it up the poor thing was so broken in heart and body, that we only brought her home to die. She died in my arms, and I promised to keep up the search so long as I lived. She had a firm belief that her child was not dead, and the horror of its growing up among bad people haunted her perpetually. Her husband lived ten years after her death, and though he never kept up such a constant search as I did, yet he could not forget that there was a chance of his lost daughter's being alive somewhere. I think his heart was broken too—more by the loss of his wife, perhaps, than by that of his child. Both parents had been rich, and when the father died he willed all their possessions to their child, who might yet be discovered living in ignorance of her parentage. After a certain time, if nothing has been heard of the girl or her descendants, the property will

be broken up and divided in charity. Since the father's death I have never for one moment relaxed my efforts to discover some trace of the child of my friends. I now begin to grow old, and I fear I shall not be able to keep it up much longer. I have cheered my heart many a time, telling myself that the girl would be a daughter to me in my advancing age, and would repay me with her love for all the labour I have had for her. She would now be nineteen years of age. When a child, her hair was dark; it would now be darker still. Her eyes, I think, would be grey, the colour of her mother's. I have often fancied I saw a face like what I had pictured her to myself, and spent feverish days in finding out my mistake. Now you know what I meant by a will o' the wisp."

The faces of the innkeeper and his wife had changed so that they did not seem to be the same persons who had sat there half an hour ago. They now nodded their heads, while neither spoke.

"But why say that the will o' the wisp had appeared under our roof?" asked Rosalie, sharply.

The old lady trembled wildly, and looked round on the three faces. At this moment Stine appeared coming down the courtyard with a fresh supply of coffee.

"My friends! my friends!" cried the little old lady, stretching out her hands to them, "I believe that there"—pointing to Stine—"comes the child I have been seeking for these many years!"

Monsieur Van Melckelieke sprang to his feet, while his wife pushed back her chair, and stared furiously at the stranger.

"Madame has lost her mind!" cried monsieur, eyeing the lady with terror.

"Ah no, monsieur! Tell me that I am right, or help me to the proof of it. My child has in some strange way been thrown upon your charity. Some feeling of honour makes you wish to keep a secret."

"Madame is all wrong," said the man, a little mollified. "The girl is my niece. I will bring you face to face with her mother. She lives at some distance, but she shall be brought here to satisfy you."

"Bring her at once," said the old lady.

Next morning a coarse, loud-voiced woman came into the inn, and Madame the Stranger was summoned to meet her in the garden under the apple-tree. All the family were present at the interview—monsieur, madame, Rosalie, Stine, and Jacques.

"She is my daughter," said the coarse woman; "but I gave her up to my brother

for the good of the family. Speak out, Stine, and say if I am not your mother."

"I have always known you as my mother," said Stine, shrinking from her. "Dear madame," to the Englishwoman, "give up this fancy. I am grieved to be such a trouble to you."

"Help me, good Jacques, to get back to my chamber," said the poor old lady, faintly.

That night, very late, when Stine was wearily toiling up her tower staircase, a door opened, and the English madame came out, wrapped in her shawl.

"My dear," she said, "take me up to your tower room to see the view from your window. It must be fine this starry night. Besides, I want to talk to you."

Stine's little room seemed situated in a star, so high was it above the peaks of the Flemish houses away down in the town below. The cathedral tower looked over at her in ghostly magnificence. Her small lattice lay open, and the music of the chimes came floating dreamily in as they played their melody through in honour of the midnight hour. The room was cool, dark, and quiet. Madame sat down on Stine's little bed, and the cathedral clock struck twelve.

"My dear," she said to Stine, "I am not going to afflict you with my trouble. I am used to disappointment, yet there is something in this case which is different from all my former experiences. I cannot shake off the interest I feel in you. Granted that I am a crazed old woman, still I would like to leave my mark, a good mark, upon your fate. Do not be afraid to speak freely to me, my child. They are harsh to you in this house."

"They are not very kind."

"You would wish to get out of their power, and yet not marry Jacques."

"I will not marry Jacques—Heaven bless him!"

"Yet a husband could protect you."

"They are not going to kill me; and I am able to bear my life."

The little old English madame was silent, reflected a minute, and then began again.

"I went out this evening to calm my heart in the cathedral. I found it almost deserted, and full of a solemn peace. I prayed, and became resigned. Having finished, I was resting myself, when I found the painter, Monsieur Lawrence, standing beside me. He addressed me as your friend, and we had some whispered conversation. He talked about you. He loves you. You have repulsed him. Is it possible that you are so hard!"

"Madame, I am not hard," gasped Stine, after a pause.

"I can believe it."

"Madame, before I knew Monsieur Lawrence I had never loved anything; now it seems as if I could love the whole world for his sake. He is to me all that one lives for, lives by. He is absolutely as my life. I speak extravagantly, madame; but remember, at least, that I did not wish to speak at all."

"Go on," urged the little lady.

"There was a time," said Stine, leaning on the sill, and gazing over clasped hands into the starry outer dimness, "a time when I never thought of checking my love, seeing nothing in it that was not beautiful and good. But I was forced to change my mind. Madame, I will tell you about it. I was sitting one evening in the court-yard at my knitting, and the students were supping in their club-room; the blind was down, the window open. I heard the men's voices talking, but I was not minding what they said. I was thinking of Monsieur Lawrence, of some words that he had said to me, and of the beautiful look that always came into his eyes when he saw me. He was away that day, and I always allowed myself to think of him most when he was at a distance; it seemed less bold, somehow, than when he was near. Suddenly I heard his name mentioned in the club-room, and he became the subject of conversation among the students. They spoke of his noble character, and of his genius, and some one said, 'If he only keeps out of harm's way he has a fine career before him.' Then there was confusion of voices, and by-and-bye I learned that the chief thing he had to fear was marriage with a woman as poor as himself. Then my own name was brought into the conversation, and there was more confusion, till a voice said severely, 'That, indeed, would be his total ruin.' Madame, the words came out through the window to me, and buzzed about my head like fiery gnats, and then made their way inward, and settled and burned their way down to my heart. When I came up here that night I sat down here, and thought about it. At first I said to myself, 'It is untrue; I should help, and not hinder him; I should work so hard, and privation would be nothing to me.' But soon my mind came round to see the truth. The poorest bread costs money, and a woman is often in the way. A man of genius must not be fettered. If he drudges to boil the pot how shall he soar to his just ambition?"

After that I used to go about saying to myself, to keep up my courage, 'I will not be his ruin. I will not spoil his life.' And then, when one day he found me in trouble, and asked me to marry him, I had strength to refuse him. This is the whole of my secret, madame. I love him, and will protect him from the harm that I could do him."

"My dear," said the Englishwoman, "I believe you are indeed the stuff to make a good wife; and I warn you not to let your honourable scruples carry you out of reach of a well-earned happiness that may be yours. You and Monsieur Lawrence are young, and can wait. Meantime, you need not give the lie to your hearts. Take the word of an old woman; there is nothing so precious in this world as love, when it is wise; and especially if it has been made holy by passing through a little pain."

Next evening Stine went to the convent, a mile out of the town, to fetch eggs and melons for the inn housekeeping. Coming back again, along the canal under the poplars, she sat down to rest a minute, with her basket by her side. The sun had set, the brown sails in the canal had still a red tinge on their folds, and the spires and peaks of the town loomed faint and far through an atmosphere as of gold-dust. Stine's heart bounded with a painful delight, as she saw Monsieur Lawrence coming towards her, under the shadow of the poplars. She would have liked to run away, but that was not to be thought of.

She rose, however, to her feet, and he came beside her, and they stood looking at each other.

"I did not mean to frighten you," he said; "and I am not going to annoy you. I have come to bid you good-bye, as I leave the town to-morrow. After all that has come and gone, Stine, you will not deny me a kind word at parting."

"It is better for you to go, Monsieur Lawrence. I hope you will succeed, wherever you are."

"I shall do pretty well, I suppose. I should have done better, I think, if your love had blessed my life. But I will not vex you about that any more. One thing I ask, that you will let that good old English lady have a care over you."

"Do not be uneasy about me. Good-bye, Monsieur Lawrence. I suppose you are now going further up the road? I am already late; I must get home."

"Hard to the last!" said Lawrence, bitterly.

The reproach was too much for Stine;

it broke the ice about her heart, and the waters of desolation poured in upon her. She turned her face, white and quivering, on Monsieur Lawrence.

"I am not hard——" she began, pitifully.

"Stine!" he cried, reading her face aright, at last, and stretching out his arms to her.

"Oh, Monsieur Lawrence!" she cried, and fell upon his breast, weeping. "I have been hard," she said, defending herself; "only because I dared not be otherwise. I have hurt myself more than you. Even now I am wrong. Do not let me ruin you."

"You have been very near ruining me," he answered; "but that is past."

When Stine came into the inn with the eggs and melons, she was scolded for being late; but Madame Van Melckelieke's abusive words fell about her ears like so many rose-leaves.

That night, when Stine and the Dame Anglaise were conversing up in the tower, a tap came at the door, and Monsieur Lawrence joined the conference. The three sat whispering together, barely able to see one another, by the light of the stars. Here it was arranged that Lawrence should go to Paris and seek his fortune, while Stine, as his betrothed, should remain at her work in the inn. They were to love and trust each other till Lawrence should find himself ready to come and take his wife. The chimes rang, the stars blinked, the old lady sat between the lovers, like the good godmother in the fairy tale. Madame was to watch over Stine till Lawrence should come for her, while no one else in the inn was to know the secret but Jacques.

Early one morning, while the inn was asleep, Stine came into the cathedral when the doors were just open, and even the earliest worshippers were not arrived. She laid a bunch of white flowers upon the step of the altar, and then Lawrence came beside her, and they vowed their vow of betrothal, and said good-bye.

After this the days went on as usual at La Grue. The painters painted in their studio, and supped in their club-room, and regretted the absent Lawrence, but yet commended him for running away from danger. The English lady had taken up her residence regularly at the inn. The landlord was hardly pleased to have her. He always eyed her suspiciously, having a fear that that craze about Stine had not been altogether banished from her mind. In this, however, he was wrong. The poor

little wearied-out lonely lady had given in to fate at last, telling herself that her faithful search had been in vain, that the child she had sought must be long since dead, that she needed repose, and might venture to indulge her fancy for employing herself in a kindly care of Stine. She came and went about the inn, sitting in her little lofty chamber looking over at the chimes, exchanging civilities in the garden with monsieur and madame, wandering about the quaint old town, poking among ancient churches, or trying to talk a little Flemish to the poor. She did not dare show much sympathy for Stine, lest the powers that ruled the inn should take it in their heads to turn her out of doors. She had to listen to many a bitter scolding, and witness many an unkind action, and dared not interfere, lest worse might come of it. Only at night, when Stine came to the room of her little friend, did they venture on any intercourse. Then Lawrence's latest news was discussed, and his prospects talked over; and Stine went to bed as happy as though there were not a scolding tongue in the world. Harshness did not hurt her now as it used to do. She had lost her fragile and woe-begone air; she grew plump and rosy, and her eyes began to shine. She sang over her work, and often smiled to herself with happiness, when no one was by.

The elders perceived this change, and pointed it out to Jacques.

"Thou seest," said monsieur, "she is getting quite pretty. Thou canst not be so stupid as still to refuse to marry her."

"Pretty!" cried Jacques; "I do not see it. To my thinking, the Dame Anglaise is prettier."

"At least, she would make a thrifty wife."

"Cependant," said Jacques, "she is better as a fellow-servant."

"Thou art too hard to please," said monsieur, angrily, surveying the crooked figure of the little man.

"Every man has a right to choose his wife," said Jacques, "and I mean to do better than to marry that Stine."

The innkeeper was baffled.

"Our affairs stand still," he grumbled to his wife. "The law will not allow you to marry a man against his will. I do not see what we can do."

"Wait a bit," said madame; "it is not possible that Jacques dislikes her."

"And thou—dost thou also like her?" sneered monsieur.

"But that is a different thing," declared

madame ; "I cannot like a creature who keeps me in fear and stands in my way."

"It is true," groaned monsieur, "she is a bright-eyed marmot, but she keeps us in deadly fear."

Whatever the fear was, it preyed upon the master of La Grue. From being merely a brutishly sulky man, he became irritable and violent; even madame, his wife, began to moderate her temper, lest, being both in a flame together, they should burn their establishment to death. He began to vow often to his wife that he would not have that Anglaise in the house a week longer; that he would have Jacques popped into the canal, and Stine shipped off to the antipodes. He would wait on his guests himself for the future; his wife should do the cooking, and let Rosalie work at the ironing and keep the books. His wife soothed him as well as she was able, but monsieur was hard to soothe, and when quiet he was timorous and moody. He left off eating much, and his flesh began to fall away.

"I feel that I shall have a fever," he complained, "and when I am raving I shall be sure to tell the story."

"Nobody shall come near you but me," said his wife; and, when his fears came to be verified, and she put him to bed in a state of delirium, she suffered no one to help her in the task of nursing him. The little Anglaise came once on tip-toe to the chamber door to ask how monsieur fared, but madame greeted her with a face so dark that she never cared to venture on this mission again. The crisis of the fever passed, and monsieur was restored to his senses, without having betrayed in his ravings any secret that might be rankling in his mind. The inn became more lively, and madame the landlady was persuaded by her daughter to take a drive out of the town for change of air. Monsieur was not able to speak much, and Jacques was allowed to sit by him till his wife returned.

"Jacques," said the sick man, faintly, "they think I am getting better, but I know I am going to die."

"No, monsieur, no," said Jacques.

"I have not long to live, my friend, and you must go for the curé and the maire. Bring them to me quickly, before my wife comes back."

"But, monsieur——"

"Go, or I shall die on the instant, and my death will be on your head."

Stine had quiet times just now, and she was in the garden leaning against a tree,

with her knitting-needles clinking in her fingers. The Anglaise sat opposite to her, and they were talking of Monsieur Lawrence. While thus engaged, they saw Jacques, the curé, and the maire coming down the court-yard. Monsieur desired to make his will and prepare for death, they said to one another; and both were shocked.

Some time afterwards Jacques came running through the archway into the garden, his face and manner so excited that the women stood amazed.

"Come, madame," he said to the Anglaise, "you are wanted immediately in monsieur's chamber." The Englishwoman followed him wondering, and Stine went back to her kitchen to prepare for supper.

Half an hour passed. Stine was standing at the window straining the soup, when she saw the little Anglaise coming hurrying down the court-yard, white-faced, her head hanging as if with weakness, missing a step now and then, striking her foot against the stones of the pavement, and feeling, as if blindly, for the door as she entered the kitchen. She snatched the ladle out of Stine's hand and flung it on the floor, seized the girl by the shoulders, laughed in her face, gave a sob, and fell back swooning into the arms of Jacques; all of which meant that the will o' the wisp had turned out a veritable hearth-light at last.

"Ah, monsieur le maire, monsieur le curé!" she cried, recovering; "let them come here and tell the story, for my head is still astray, and I want to hear it again. Come out of this place, girl! thou art not Stine, thou art Bertha, daughter of Sir Sydney Errington, and Millicent his wife, both of broken-hearted memory, in Devonshire, in England. It is all written down. Jacques, we saw it written down. Will the gentlemen come and read it to us, or will they not?"

The curé and maire came in with solemn faces. Madame sat on a bench, and drank from a glass of water, while Jacques stood on guard by her side. Stine retreated, and leaned with her back against the wall, looking doubtfully at these people who had come to change her life. There was no mistake at all about the innkeeper's dying statement. The nurse who had stolen the child had been his first wife, from whom he had separated for a time that they might earn some money. When she came home to him with the child he, being afraid of her, had helped her to conceal it. He was then a waiter in Paris, and they took up house together, and prospered. She assured him that her motive for stealing the child had

been revenge, and that one day, after the parents had suffered enough, a large reward should be obtained for restoring her to them. With this he had been obliged to be satisfied. His wife set up business as a clear-starcher, and made money enough for the child's support and her own. She used to smudge the child's face with brown, and dress it in boy's clothing; but she died suddenly when it was five years of age. Then had monsieur thought of ridding himself of the burden, but had been frightened out of his senses by some one whom he had consulted on the subject. He became afraid for his very life at thought of any one discovering the identity of the girl. Heaviest punishment, he feared, must be the reward of his daring to restore her to her sorrowing friends. When he came to Dindans as owner of the inn, he brought with him Stine as his niece, and a strange woman came to live in a cottage outside the town who pretended to be his sister-in-law, and the mother of the girl. He had trained Stine to be useful, and, by marrying her to Jacques, had thought to turn her to still further account in his service. No one but his second wife and the pretended mother had ever shared the secret which had sat for years on this cowardly soul. Now that he was going to die he would shuffle it off. He had always, he declared, meant to tell the truth before he died. If the Dame Anglaise had not arrived then, he would have left the story and its proofs with the curé of the town.

"Gentlemen," said Stine, coming out of her corner, "let us not disturb the house of death. Madame Van Melckelicke returns, and these things will not please her."

The landlady's voice was here heard, and the maire and the curé disappeared very willingly, while Stine brought the Anglaise away to her chamber. The poor little lady was beside herself, and kept caressing Stine, and telling what fine things were waiting for her. "My child, my little queen!" she said, "my lady of the manor! Ah, wait, my love, till you see your English home!"

Stine was quite confounded by the news; sat silently leaning her face on her hand, and gazing at her friend.

"I do not understand it," she said. She was not willing to follow the idea of any change so complete. It seemed to break up her expectation of that striving and hopeful life with Lawrence in Paris. She did not as yet perceive how good it would be for him.

Suddenly the Anglaise gave a shriek. "Mon Dieu! child, you are plighted to a humble artist. Ah! how fate has been cheating us! Why was I such a fool as to counsel such a step? But it is not yet too late. Monsieur Lawrence must give you up. You shall marry in your own rank—"

"Madame!" cried Stine, springing to her feet; "I know not anything of your England, and I will have nothing to do with it. If my husband is not fit to be a nobleman there, why, we will be noble after our own fashion in our grenier in Paris." Then, suddenly perceiving the prosperity which her transformation would bestow upon Lawrence, she burst into a passion of delight, and knelt, laughing and sobbing, by the side of the bed.

"Forgive me, my dear," said the old lady, half terrified; "my senses are coming back to me, and I love you for that speech. Lawrence is now in London; let us set out at once, and take him by surprise."

Lawrence had finished his business in London, and was on the eve of starting for Paris when, returning one night to his lodgings, he found a note, in a lady's handwriting, waiting for him on the table. The writing was not Stine's, and it was not a foreign letter. It announced that Miss Errington begged him to visit her at her manor-house, in Devonshire. Now, who was Miss Errington? for Lawrence had no acquaintance with Erringtons, nor yet with manor-houses. He considered the matter gravely, and finally wrote to Stine, at Dindans, telling her of the occurrence; also that he had accepted the invitation, hoping to find that some wealthy connoisseur had taken a fancy to his pictures. Between his paragraphs was inserted a comical sketch of this possible patron; a lady of venerable aspect, with nut-cracker features, and leaning on a long staff.

It was evening when he arrived at the manor-house, just so light that he could see the rich country through which he was travelling—could discern, with his artist-eyes, the beautiful wooded lands, which he was told had belonged to the Erringtons for numberless generations. He dressed for dinner in a handsome, old-fashioned chamber, and was conducted to the drawing-room. The door closed behind him, and he was in a room softly lighted, in which everything was rich, antique, tasteful, beautiful. A lady sat by the fire alone—a young and graceful figure, clothed in soft white draperies. She rose as he approached, but kept her face averted. He saw the lovely and familiar

outline of a cheek, a head with a crown of braided hair, yet for one moment more he did not know that upon this home-hearth burned for him, now and evermore, that life-light which had once been called a will o' the wisp. The lady turned her face, and Lawrence, bowing, advanced a step. Then, suddenly, there arose a sort of cry from two voices, rent by passionate surprise, and joy took eternal possession of the lives of these happy lovers.

LOOKING round the circle as the lady's story ended amidst a general burst of approbation, Mr. Rufus P. Croffut detected one exception to the general rule. This was a fat, heavy-looking German, who stood hard by, shaking his head with vast solemnity, and who, on being questioned, declared that love stories were only fit for boys and girls, and that for his part he preferred something stronger. The president saw his opportunity at once. "Then, I guess," he said, "you can tell us something better yourself?" A grim smile for a moment lighted up the German's features. "Ja wohl," he nodded. "You shall see. I shall make the ladies' flesh creep. So." And removing the great pipe which had hitherto adorned his lips, he continued, somewhat to this effect:

URSULA'S MATE.

IT was just a week after the wedding of the rich farmer, Michael Straus and Ursula Hünwitz, the belle of the small old town of Meitzberg, when the first adventure, in the story I am going to relate, occurred.

A peaceable man of forty, short, and very fat, who loved his neighbour and loved good liquor, and a pipe, at least as well, was trudging home to this town of Meitzberg, at about ten o'clock at night.

His name was Peter Schmiedler, and he was on this particular occasion sober; for he had been supping with a rich old aunt, who lived at the other side of the pine-wood, and who, although in other respects an excellent old woman, was a rigid stickler for temperance.

From this repast he had taken his departure, as I mentioned, sober; and specially regretted being in that state of disadvantage while on his solitary night-march, through a mile and more of thick forest, which was reputed to be haunted by all sorts of malignant sprites; and then, for a good half mile more, by the margin of a lake, infested by no less formidable Nixies, or water-demons.

Clouds were slowly drifting across the sky, and spreading a curtain, broken only at intervals, over the moon. The darkness was profound as the path entered the forest, and the light wind, before which the clouds were driving, made a melancholy moaning in the tops of the trees.

Peter Schmiedler's courage melted quite away, as he stole along the haunted path, which at times, when the clouds became denser, grew so dark that he could scarcely, as they say, see his hand before him.

Holding his breath; sometimes listening; often stopping short, or even recoiling a step, as if some sudden noise among the branches, or the screech of the owl from its "lonely bower" in the forest nooks scared him; thus he had got on, till he had reached about the midway point in his march.

As the wind subsided a little, to his inexpressible terror, he became distinctly aware of the sound of a footstep accompanying him, within a few feet of his side.

When the wind lulled again, the stride of his unseen companion was more plainly audible upon the dry peat, or crunching the withered sticks that lay strewn over the pathway. When he first perceived the step that accompanied him, Peter once or twice stopped short, as I said, to ascertain whether the sounds might not be but the echo of his own steps. But, too surely, they were nothing of the kind, for they were on each occasion continued, for some few paces, after he had come to a stand-still; and then his silent companion also stopped.

Whatever this being might be that walked by his side in the dark, Peter could endure the suspense no longer. He stopped again, and made an effort to speak, but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth; and it was not until he had repeated his effort twice or thrice that he found voice to adjure his companion to declare who he was.

Hereupon this unseen companion spoke suddenly, in a harsh and vehement voice:

"I'm a deserter," replied he.

There was nothing very human in the tone; and even assuming the speaker to be a creature of flesh and blood, a deserter was likely to be a desperate character, and by no means a pleasant companion for a fat little fellow, with some silver in his purse, to light on in such a lonely path.

Peter and his unseen companion walked on for nearly five minutes more, side by side, before Peter spoke again. Every moment he fancied that the stranger would spring at his throat and strangle him.

Having got his hand against the stem of

a tree, he halted suddenly, stepped behind it, and, thus protected, addressed his unseen companion once more.

"A deserter?" he blurted out, "a deserter from where? a deserter from what?"

"A deserter from hell!" answered the same fierce, coarse voice, and something smote the ground—a furious stamp or a blow of a club—that made the hollow peat tremble with its emphasis.

Peter's heart jumped; he had vague thoughts of backing softly away among the trees and losing himself in the forest, till morning. But he had heard, or had fancied, such unearthly sounds among the firs, such boomings and hootings from the distant glades that night, and was still so uncertain as to the powers and purpose of the unknown, that he preferred his chance on the path he knew, to embarking in new and, possibly, more terrible adventures among the solitary recesses of the forest.

It now occurred to him, that he might possibly steal a march on his persecutor. He listened; there was no step now; the wretch was waiting for him.

Very softly, he made one short step on the light mossy ground, and another, perfectly noiseless step, and a third as cautious, and so on, till he had made some forty or fifty yards. But, as with throbbing heart he was half congratulating himself on his supposed escape, and was tip-toeing along at a swifter pace, close beside him the same startling voice said:

"You shall see me presently."

If a cannon had gone off within a yard of Peter's elbow, the sound could not have astounded him more. He staggered sideways, with a gasp; and when he recovered himself a little, he made up his mind to walk steadily along the path, the line of which he could only trace by looking upward, and watching the irregular parting of the trees overhead. Guided by this faint line, he stumped on, with knees bending with fear; and, at last, just as the moon broke through the driving clouds, and shone clear over plain and lake, and on the quaint little town of Meitzberg, not a quarter of a mile away, he emerged from the forest, with his companion by his side.

That companion was a tall, broad-shouldered grenadier of Vanderhauser's regiment of musketeers, dressed in the old-world uniform. His blue coat, with red facings, and garniture of yellow worsted lace, was obscured by the dust of his journey, as were his long gaiters; his small three-cornered hat was powdered with the same; his ruffles were soiled and disordered, and

his white vest nothing the better for his long, forced march. In his hand he carried an enormously long musket. His face looked grim and savage beyond description, and there was a straight red scar along his cheek, from his nose to his ear. A fine smell of brandy accompanied this warrior; and the very smell infused courage into the heart of Peter Schmiedler.

He was satisfied that the grenadier was a mortal; but a hang-dog, dangerous-looking mortal as ever he had set eyes on.

The soldier took Peter in the grip of his right hand, a little above the elbow, and held him, while he questioned him, staring all the time savagely in his eyes.

"Look ye, comrade, you had best speak truth, and shortly, for I don't care the spark of a flint for man or devil, and I'd shoot you through the head as soon as wink."

He struck the butt of the long musket furiously on the ground, and Peter recognised the sound that, in the forest, he had mistaken for the stroke of a club.

"As I hope for mercy, I'll answer you truly, ask what you will," whimpered he; "but pray, sir, don't hurt me so; you're pinching my arm like a thousand devils."

"Is it true," said the grenadier, squeezing his arm tighter as he went on, "that Ursula Hünwitz has married Michael Straus? Yes, or no—quick!"

"Yes, yes; it is true!" screamed Peter. "They are married—a week ago. I saw it; I was at it; I supped there and drank their healths."

"Ay, I guessed it would so turn out," said the man, in a tone no longer of anger, but of deep dejection. "The news came that it was fixed. It came in a letter to Nicholas Spielman, the halberdier."

The soldier still held Peter fast by the arm, but no longer with a grip that hurt him so much.

"I left my quarters," resumed the soldier, "the night I heard it; I knew I should not be missed till beat of drum, in the morning. I have travelled, on foot, every day, twelve leagues since. Thirty-six leagues, a long march, and, for a reason, I carried this with me." He knocked the butt of his musket, this time, lightly on the ground. "Come down here, Peter Schmiedler, with me; I must show you a thing or two, and give you a message."

His hand tightened as he said this, and he marched Peter about two score yards, down to the margin of the lake.

"Ho!" said Peter, to himself, in wonder, "he knows my name, and to my knowledge I never set eyes on him before."

"It is four years and a half," said the soldier, "since I shouldered this musket and parted with Ursula Hünwitz, on this very spot. She was eighteen; I had been courting her for two years; man never loved girl as I loved her. She said she loved me with all her heart, and here we two swore to be true, each to other, till the hour of death. You know me, now, who I am," he said, suddenly pausing.

Peter gave him a good hard stare.

"N-no, I can't say I know you—unless—ha! No, it couldn't—it isn't—"

"Yes, it is; I'm Hans Wouverheim."

"By my soul, Hans, I didn't know you! How awful ugly you've grown! I mean manly; you're a foot taller, almost—and that devil of a scar!"

The moon had now got out of the cloud-banks into blue sky; and her light was steady and brilliant.

"I'm Hans Wouverheim, that left this spot, a recruit, four and a half years ago. Look at the butt of this musket; here, where I show you. With her bodkin I scratched the first letters of her name. Look! U. H. Look here! Here's her hair."

He pulled out from his breast a little cloth bag, true-blue, like his coat, and inside it was another, of silk; and within that a long lock of golden hair.

"There it is," he cried, "I kept it ever since; it has been with me in battle and bivouac. Curse it!"

He thrust it back quickly.

"I told her," he continued, "I'd fight my way up the hill; that she'd hear of Hans Wouverheim wherever thunder and laurels were going. I have seven musket wounds and this thing," he drew his finger along the scar. "I have led the life of a dog, I've slept in the mud for weeks, I've been half starved, I've been a month at a time without bread or biscuit—with nothing but mushrooms and onions—sometimes acorns and apples. I bore all—I feared nothing—what cared I for bullets? I'm a corporal, you see, and I'm first on the list for sergeant, and I have two hundred and eighty rix-dollars, prize-money, and—I did all for her sake! What do you think I deserted for, and marched nigh forty leagues in three days? I came to see Ursula, and to shoot her through the heart. But I'll not shoot her, I'll let her live, and think on what she has done. She'll have her punishment time enough."

The wild manner in which this musketeer was talking made Peter Schmiedler very uncomfortable indeed. It was plain

the man was either mad or desperate; and there he was, breathing death and slaughter, with his firelock in his hand, his bandoleer on, with its powder charges dangling from it in a row, and the bourse of bullets apparently well filled.

"There's a round dozen of lives there!" thought Peter with a qualm, "and I'd wager a pot of wine his matchlock is charged. And, then, his rapier! A powerful fellow like that, driving right and left with a sword, why he could take Meitzberg, and all that's in it, if it only came into his head to try!"

"Look! friend Peter," said the soldier, "you live in the High-street of Meitzberg, here, opposite the sign of the Cheese and Flagon, and, you think, before ten minutes, you'll be sitting there telling your story. Now, mark me, you'll never sit there again, for I'll club my musket and knock your brains out here, unless you swear to give my message and do as I tell you. What do you say?" he shouted, in his wild, startling tones.

"Himmel! why need you be excited, Hans? I swear with pleasure," said Peter.

"Well, when I part with this firelock, which will be in a few minutes, you take it, and show the letters U. H., and tell all the rest I told you, and all you are going to hear and see, faithfully to Ursula Hünwitz—Straus, Ursula Straus! curse them both—and tell her she has been the ruin of me, body and soul, and that Hans Wouverheim, when he was leaving you, said that he would take her hair with him where he's going, and will never forget her oath. She swore her heart was mine, and sooner or later her own false heart will work out its own punishment. There's my message to her. Do you understand it?"

"Perfectly," said Peter.

"And now another shorter message," resumed the grenadier. "I have been an honourable soldier, up to this, and it shan't be said I wronged my sovereign. Take my firelock, when you have seen Ursula, to the magistrate, to keep for the military commissioner; place in his hands, moreover, this sum"—he put an old leathern purse in the hands of Peter Schmiedler, as he spoke—"which is the official price of my uniform and my sword; tell him I owe no man anything, having paid that price to my sovereign, and paid my life to Death, to whom alone I owe it. And remember, if you fail to fulfil your promise to me, so sure as ever man returned to the living, I will come and plague you for it."

With these words he dropped his musket

to the ground, drew his sword, and catching it in both hands by the blade, drove the point with a fierce stab into his breast, staggered back a step or two and fell over the bank headlong into the lake, which is there very deep, with a loud splash.

Peter, throwing up both his hands, uttered a howl of terror as he witnessed the catastrophe. Half a dozen steps brought him to the water, and he saw the circles that still chased one another outwards from the centre of disturbance, glimmering in the moonlight; but no sign of the unhappy musketeer was visible.

He watched for a few seconds; a little longer; for a minute—for two or three minutes; the chill horror that was silently stealing over him culminated at length, and with a shudder, and something like a prayer, he recoiled. He picked up the musket, which, if it had not been for the threat of the soldier, he assuredly would not have touched, and ran homeward as fast as a fellow with short legs and a considerable paunch, carrying a heavy musket beside, could well be expected to do.

At the town, late as it was, he soon had a large and eager audience about him.

He was so anxious to acquit himself of Hans Wouverheim's commission, and so horribly afraid of a visit that very night from his vengeful ghost, that, musket in hand, and accompanied by half a dozen townsmen, he without delay knocked at rich Farmer Straus's door.

The farmer and his wife were at supper; but, on a very urgent message, the Herr Pastor and Peter Schmiedler were admitted.

The bride was dressed in a rich shot silk, such as you sometimes see in old Dutch pictures. She had lace and golden ornaments on, for it was the pride of the old fellow, her husband, that his wealth should declare itself in the dress and decoration of his beautiful bride.

The farmer, a short square fellow of some four-and-fifty, with big hands, an iron-grey bullet-head, beard and moustache, and a solemn face, with small suspicious eyes, rose from his seat, with his beard dripping with gravy, and a tall glass of Rhine wine beside him.

Both wife and husband looked surprised, and their eyes turned from Peter to the Herr Pastor and back again, for it was not easy to divine what had brought them together, Peter being by no means a meet companion for a holy man.

The farmer invited his visitors to supper, but the Herr Pastor had already had his;

and Peter, after the sights he had seen, had no appetite left.

Straus pointed towards Peter's hands.

"What's that for?" said the farmer, who had been eyeing the musket jealously.

Upon this invitation Peter started, and when he had shown the initials scratched upon the stock of the gun, and reported all that Hans Wouverheim had narrated:

"What a wicked pack of lies!" exclaimed the lady, with a scornful toss of her head.

"What a queer story!" said her husband.

"Hans Wouverheim, indeed!" she exclaimed.

"Done with a bodkin!" said the farmer.

"Why, Michael, my love! you don't mean to say you believe that bundle of rubbish?"

The farmer scratched his head slowly.

"Well," said he, "perhaps he has done the most sensible thing he could."

"If he has killed himself he must have been out of his mind; and being so, his story isn't worth a pin; and why should you or I, dearest, let it vex us?" said the lady.

"It don't vex me," said the farmer; "but I think his friends should fish up the body, and have it buried, decently, in the churchyard. I only want to be sure he did kill himself; a rascally deserter is so full of tricks; they'd stop at nothing."

"There, there," said Peter, uneasily, "don't—pray, don't. He's at the bottom of the lake, as dead as that stone jar. In the name of all that's good let us speak with respect of the dead."

"And as to laying him in the churchyard," said the Herr Pastor, "I fear that would hardly consist with our laws, seeing that the unhappy man has committed, as Peter Schmiedler assures us, deliberate self-murder."

"I don't see why, with all reverence, even so, he should not have a grave in a corner of the churchyard, where no one else wants to lie," said Peter, who felt that Hans might hold him accountable for his exclusion from holy ground. "And as you were so good as to offer me a glass of that kirschwasser, I'll change my mind and take it, with your good leave," he added, addressing himself to the farmer.

Peter had never drunk so many drams before in so short a time as he had since his last look at the ill-starred musketeer, yet he was not tipsy, and he could not expel the unearthly terror that lay cold and heavy as death at his heart. Never did he wish so fervently to be drunk, and never had he experienced the same difficulty in approaching that generally facile goal.

The beautiful Frau Ursula Straus was never so gay and animated. The good minister was shocked at it, and it even increased Peter's nervous horrors. Every possible thing was being said and done to exasperate the offended spirit of Hans Wouverheim, and Peter was sure that, however innocent he might be, to him the dead soldier's first visit would be paid.

Shrewder people would, perhaps, have suspected that the pretty and heartless bride was concealing her own auxiliaries and endeavouring to mislead her husband's awakened jealousy by this demonstration of more than usual hilarity.

It was growing late, and the Herr Pastor took his leave, accompanied by Peter Schmiedler, grown on a sudden from one of the most insignificant to be one of the most important of the inhabitants of Meitzberg.

In the kitchen of the Cheese and Flagon thirsty souls made an excuse of the amazing occurrence which Peter had witnessed, to sit up later than usual over their cans and pipes. The rest of the town slept as usual, and poor Hans Wouverheim, more soundly, let us hope, than he had done since the fatal news of the marriage of Ursula Hünwitz had reached him.

That beautiful young lady and her husband, it was said, had some uncomfortable and rather sharp talk that night over Peter Schmiedler's odd revelations, and early next morning, before daybreak, the rich man went off in a huff to one of his farms, about eight leagues distant from Meitzberg.

The Frau Ursula sent to beg the minister to pay her a visit, and when he came he found the lady in tears.

"Only think, good Herr Pastor," cried she, "my husband has been upbraiding me ever since that drunken rogue Peter Schmiedler came in here last night, under your protection, to tell that cock-and-a-bull story, not one word in fifty of which has even a colour of truth. All he alleges Hans to have said of me, and those scratches on the firelock—which I am certain Peter made with his own penknife—is, from beginning to end, an arrant lie, as you will see in a moment if you reflect. Hans Wouverheim, you know, never had a crown piece to bless himself with. Why should I have listened to him? I hope it was never supposed that I was reduced to look at such as he; and now here's my fool of a husband gone off from his comfortable home, fancying I don't know what, with his head full of windmills—and all for

what? Just this; because you came here to gain admission for that notorious sot, and countenance him while he seeks to sow dissension in honest families?"

"But, madam," said the minister "part of Peter Schmiedler's narrative has proved undoubtedly true, for the body of the musketeer, with the sword still stuck through his ribs, has been got out of the lake only half an hour ago; and it has been identified by Kielwitz the waggoner, and by old Martha Plaatz, who nursed him, as undoubtedly that of Hans Wouverheim. And, what is more, they found the two little bags, one of silk and one of cloth, one inside the other, containing the lock of hair as described by Peter."

"It is no lock of mine," said the lady, "and I don't care a rush whether it is the body of Hans or of any other trumpery soldier; there is not so much truth as would fit in a gnat's eye in the ridiculous story that drunken Peter chooses to put into his mouth. It could have had no effect if you had not come with that rascal under your wing, and you have done mischief, Herr Pastor, and are sowing quarrels in your parish. And, with all respect, I say, you had no business to come here, as you did, last night."

And with this Madam Ursula showed the reverend gentleman the door with an excellent air of injured innocence and offended virtue.

Shortly after, somewhat inconsistently, she sent to beg a visit from Peter Schmiedler. She had dried her tears and recovered her coolness, and she received him in a dignified and stand-off way. In this style she subjected him to a strict examination on the subject of the prize-money to which her old lover had alluded, and after which I think she had a hankering. It had occurred to her that he might probably have intrusted these very rix-dollars, by way of a legacy for her, to the care of Peter, who was not unlikely to have appropriated them.

A private purse would have been rather a convenient resource, while her husband continued contumacious; but there was no witness but Peter himself, and that hope proved barren; and Peter made his bow, relighted his pipe in the hall, and returned to his pot of beer in the Cheese and Flagon.

Hans Wouverheim, having been fully identified, was shrouded and coffined at the expense of the town. He was the last scion of a family, once important, whose name figures not obscurely in the old

records of Meitzberg. Being a suicide, he was buried with all those somewhat revolting precautions necessary to prevent his reappearance among the townsfolk as a vampire, for, in those days, the superstition to which the gentleman who told the first story has already alluded, still lingered in Meitzberg, as in other places, here and there, throughout Germany.

I don't know that Ursula was quite so hard-hearted as she affected to be. People said she was fond of Hans, although she played him the unlucky matrimonial trick that cost him his life. Her husband, being a jealous fellow, however, she was obliged to stifle her regrets, and pretend to be gay and careless. But the servants said she was sometimes found crying alone; and she undoubtedly grew more and more sour and sharp with Michael Straus, who used to fight his battles, at first, stoutly enough, but, in the long run, was worn out, and became, it was believed, henpecked and unhappy.

Thus, four years passed, and Ursula had lost nothing of her beauty—nothing of her high spirits and giddy vanity—nothing of the cruelty and pride which people ascribed to her; and she had gained a good deal, it was thought, in two qualities that don't always go together—cunning and audacity.

The town of Meitzberg, I must tell you, has its fête day. It is known as the eve of Saint Berthilda, who, in Catholic times, was the patroness of the pretty little town, and is still held in respect as an excellent excuse for a holiday, and a feast and dance in the evening on the grass, between the old wall and the margin of the lake.

On the day before this gala, which occurs toward the end of September, the town was in consternation; for a hurricane, unexampled, in that region, for suddenness and violence, had visited Meitzberg, stripping roofs, dislodging weathercocks, smashing windows, and whirling wooden pigeon-houses, garden-palings, tubs, and all sorts of incongruous articles, high into the air, and strewing fields, for half a mile eastward, with their fragments.

But the storm had not stopped at these freaks; it consummated in a few moments of fury, what the short surge of the lake, under the influence of the west wind, had been pottering over for years. The bank of the churchyard overhanging the lake had long been partially undermined by the water. The civic authorities had inspected, cogitated, planned, and done everything, in fact, but repair the old wall which had for

centuries resisted the wear and tear of that ceaseless ripple.

The gale had cut the matter short. A great piece of the bank had tumbled into the lake, carrying with it the grave, headstone, and coffin of the unfortunate Hans Wouverheim, who had been buried in that out-of-the-way corner of the ancient cemetery, and the outcast lay now many fathoms under the level of the water, in his rotten coffin, never to be brought to light again.

There was a good deal of disgust and indignation. There were also many gloomy inquiries of a superstitious kind; and some people, learned in that sort of lore, declared that although Hans, so long as he lay in the churchyard, could not return to plague his survivors, yet that now, released from stake and cross, and immersed in another element, he might emerge among the demons who sometimes appeared on the margin of the lake, to affright or hurt the solitary passenger.

These spectral conjectures, however, were interrupted by the bustle of preparation, and the anticipation of a general merrymaking, and the sunshine of a glorious day, filled men and girls with other thoughts, and chased away the lingering vapours of superstition.

The young Baron Von Ramer, handsome, courteous, and immensely rich, had arrived at the château at the other side of the lake, and a whisper had reached the town that he was not unlikely, in strict incognito, and as if quite accidentally, to drop in, in the course of the evening, to take part in the innocent gaieties of this rural festival. The château of the rich young baron, of whose splendour and generosity they had heard so much, was about two and a half miles distant across the water; and as the tents were being erected, and other preparations were pressed forward, in the course of the afternoon, many telescopes were directed toward that particular point; and it was reported that a boat was being manned at the steps of the terrace, under the walls of the baronial castle.

This interesting inspection was, however, interrupted; for a thin mist that had been rising at the other side of the lake, grew rapidly denser, and, just at the most interesting moment, when people had appeared at the top of the steps, and had begun to descend, it ceased to be transparent, and half a dozen curious glasses, that had been directed to that point, were, one after another, reluctantly lowered, and

only wistful looks were turned, now and then, in that direction.

The curtain had fallen. The fog spread and thickened, and now it lay upon the water like a white barrier of clouds between Meitzberg and the distant shore.

The sky above was beautifully clear, and a full moon, that night, would lend all its peculiar splendour to the fête. It was to be hoped that this fog, which seemed steadily advancing, would not spoil all by invading the grassy platform on which the tents and lamps were placed, and envelop the town itself.

Farmer Straus was away at the great fair of Loenthal buying and selling stock; but that did not prevent his gay and beautiful young wife from coming down, attended by her maid, to enjoy the festive scene.

It would certainly have been no harm, if that pretty young matron had been a little more circumspect.

Dancing, on these occasions, usually began about sunset, and was continued by torch and lamplight, or under the beams of the moon, as the case might be, till about ten o'clock; and now the evening was closing in a gorgeous sunset, the beams of which had just streamed forth, dyed crimson in the edge of the mist; and as this glorious light flooded the scene, a distant blast of trumpets, and other wind instruments, came sweetly over the waters. It was probably a mile away, and the boat and the musicians were still hid in the mist. Ursula was secretly delighted; she had set her heart on winning the admiration of the young baron, whose visit they had been led to hope for. All was going well; the fog had ceased to advance, and was now thinning. The dancing had begun; people were absorbed in the stirring scene, and had all forgotten the baron—all except Ursula.

And now the sun was down, torches blazed redly under the edge of the forest, and coloured lamps gleamed from the tents; while, over all, the glorious moon shed her silvery lustre.

The quick ear of Ursula caught the sound of music on the lake again, much nearer, but also fainter. She saw a boat pulled by four men in livery, and containing a number of musicians in a fantastic uniform, and one handsomely-dressed gentleman in velvet and gold lace.

He disembarked, followed by two servants, one carrying a violin, the other a fife. The rest remained in the boat.

Ursula's heart beat quick as she saw this cavalier approach. He drew near the linden tree, round which was the principal

gathering, and introduced himself in a manner so courtly, shaking hands with everybody in the friendliest way, that all hearts were won in a moment; and at length he came to Ursula, smiled, offered her his arm, and walked with her, back and forward in the moonlight, along the edge of the bank. His two servants followed, and his boat, some little way out, rowed also slowly back and forward, now and then sending forth a plaintive swell of music.

Ursula and the young stranger seemed soon to become deeply interested, and talked with their heads close together. More eyes were watching than she suspected, and they saw the courtly stranger and Ursula exchange rings.

This was, certainly, an odd proceeding, and we can't wonder that a little buzz of surprise, and even consternation, from the decorous townspeople of Meitzberg greeted this piece of by-play.

Presently the stranger led his beautiful partner towards the linden tree, and signed to his two servants, who instantly struck up a merry tune; and he and she, hand-in-hand, began to dance to the music with such exquisite grace, lightness, and spirit, that the admiration of the assembly drew them nearer and nearer. The dancers, meanwhile, were moving in the direction of the lake; they were now footing it on the very bank. More fantastic and wonderful grew the dance the nearer they drew to the edge, over which suddenly, with a bound, both dancers disappeared; the fife and viol each emitting a wild, mocking scream, that chilled the listeners with horror. From the boat a strange thunder of music swelled, and the hollow laughter of many shrilly voices. As the crowd rushed forward, the mist came rolling in like the dense smoke of cannon. Everything was veiled from view by the white fog that had broken its bounds, and was already surging half-way up to the town.

The fog became so thick that one could not see the blaze of a torch more than two yards away; and then only like a red halo. The frolic was over; no search was possible; and knocking their noses against walls and trees, the crowd in consternation groped its way slowly back to Meitzberg.

Next morning the lake was dragged; and, later in the day, two bodies were found; one was that of Ursula, it is alleged, with a dreadful rent in her breast, at the left side, through which her heart had been torn; her wedding-ring was gone, and in its stead a ring of iron, such as was fixed,

in old times, to the pommel of a soldier's sword.

The other was the black and swollen corpse of a tall man, on whose finger, impossible to be removed, without cutting it off, was found the wedding-ring of Ursula Straus.

Farmer Straus was, he declared, inconsolable; and certainly he never married again. He declined reclaiming the bridal ring, so horribly profaned; and the iron one is still to be seen in the armoury of the old town-house of Meitzberg.

The executioner of Spieldam, crossing the lake just then, said that the corpse, which had been taken out of the lake with Ursula's, was that of a man whom he had himself hanged a week before, and which had been stolen off the gallows at night.

The prevailing opinion, however, in his native town was, that the mysterious stranger was no other than Hans Wouverheim.

As the German replaced his pipe between his lips, with a grim chuckle, a man in a slouched hat and a heavy overcoat approached the outer edge of the circle, and shading his eyes with his hand, peered eagerly forward, as though in search of some one. An instant afterwards Croffut quietly rose, and joining the stranger entered into eager talk with him, and they walked away together.

This action had not passed unnoticed by Harry Middleton, who, associating it, he scarcely knew how, with the idea of news of Myra Otis, felt his heart sink within him, and did not dare to think of the errand on which his friend had been summoned. The narration of the stories had had on Harry just the effect which the first speaker, the French gentleman, had intended. Listening to them he had temporarily forgotten the pain he suffered and the anxiety under which he was labouring, but now his mind had reverted to the old theme, and was pursuing it with painful activity.

Was it possible that there could be any foundation for the story which the hackman had told to Croffut; was it not more likely that the whole thing had been invented by his ready-witted, new-found

friend for the purpose of quieting him, and preventing him, in his burnt and jaded state, from attempting to prosecute his search? The hotel clerk could not have been wrong, and Harry had distinctly heard him say that a lady had been left in the rooms occupied by Judge Otis. In that case Myra must have perished.

The thought was too much for Harry Middleton, and he made up his mind, come what might, to go among the people whose dim, shadowy forms he saw stretched out all round him, and ascertain for himself whether or not Myra was there. He could slip away unobserved now, for the eyes of all were fixed on the story-teller who had succeeded the German, so he rose quietly, and, though with infinite pain, managed to drag himself along for about fifty yards. Then he stumbled and fell, and there he lay helpless. He had not strength enough to rise again; a drowsy numbness was stealing over him, and he felt as though his senses were leaving him. Once again he dashed through the raging flame, scaled the sinking staircase, and gained the room. But this time Myra was there, there in the far corner of the room, between which and the spot on which he stood yawned an abyss of fire. She screamed aloud; she stretched her hands imploringly towards him, and then—

And then—he felt two soft arms placed round his neck, two warm lips pressed upon his own. "My darling," were the words to which he woke, and saw Myra kneeling by his side.

"The hackman warn't lying after all," said Rufus P. Croffut, who, with Judge Otis, was standing by. "But you see the man drove the jedge and the gal to the lake side, where there was thousands of others a-refugin'—he arn't listenin' to me one bit, and it arn't like he should! But that's a poity sight, jedge," he added, pointing to the lovers. "I like to see young Bull in the arms of his American beauty! That's what's the matter! Take about Allybarmers and sechlike gas! He had direct claims on the gal, and went through fire and water for her!"

"And got consequential damages," said the judge with a smile, pointing to Harry's wounded arm.

THE END OF THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1872.

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